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ABSTRACT

This book, which is intended to inform Australia's education community about various aspects of the national literacy debate and the policy development process, reviews the literature on literacy teaching in secondary and postsecondary education and the workplace and describes the sociocultural and educational context for development of literacy policy and programs in the 1990s. Among the topics discussed in the book's six parts are the following: part 1, broad context of literacy education (the powers of literacy; literacy levels among Australians; and citizenship, social equity, and competence); part 2, necessary content of a national policy on literacy (policy context; purpose and scope; definitions; considerations in defining literacy; teaching cycles); part 3, Australia's learners (Australian English speakers, language diversity and English literacy, indigenous Australians, special needs, socioeconomic disadvantage); part 4, school literacy education (the early years, the middle years, the later years, the postschooling sector); part 5, adult literacy, numeracy, English-as-a-Second-Language) education, and lifelong learning for all; and part 6, state and territory programs in literacy (literacy teaching and learning in department of education schools in South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, and the Northen Territory and literacy teaching and learning and current practices in literacy education in the Catholic and independent schools sectors). (Contains 162 references) (MN)

AUSTRALIAN LITERACIES

informing national policy on literacy education

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Foreword

The capacity of young people to participate in schooling, post secondary education and the workforce, is determined to a significant extent by their level of ability in literacy and numeracy. Comparison of test results suggests that there has been little change in reading ability between 1975 and 1995. Then, as now, around three in ten of Australia's youth have not achieved mastery in basic reading comprehension.

The consequences of poor literacy include an increased likelihood of leaving school early, relatively poor access to university education, the prospect of higher levels of longer term unemployment, and a greater chance of being in lower paid, less skilled jobs. In recognition of its national language and literacy research role Language Australia was commissioned by the Commonwealth government in June 1996 to prepare a paper to inform the national literacy debate and policy development process.

Australian Literacies has been prepared by Professor Lo Bianco and Language Australia in consultation with academics, literacy practitioners and representatives from education and training systems across Australia. In preparing the paper, Language Australia has provided a thorough consideration of the research and theoretical literature relevant to literacy in the

school context, focussing on literacy development in the early years, intervention strategies for children experiencing literacy problems in the middle years and links between literacy and post school pathways in the senior years.

Australian Literacies synthesises much of the wealth of valuable information and research material that exists on literacy. This comprehensive document describes the: socio cultural and educational context for the development of literacy policy and programmes in the 1990s; the complexity of literacy needs in Australia, substantiated by research findings, and their implications for teaching and learning in the early, middle and post compulsory years; appraisal of key influences on literacy learning such as school organisation, teaching methodologies, curriculum and cultural and socioeconomic factors; and State/Territory and non governrnent sector literacy education initiatives.

The authors of *Australian Literacies* have made a significant contribution to the literacy debate. I commend it as a useful reference for all Australians who are interested in this vital subject.

Dr David Kemp,
Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training
Canberra, May 1997.

Preamble

The Australian public expects that school literacy will equip students for varied roles and literate competence in post-school life. In post-school life Australians expect that all adults should be able to handle comfortably the various forms of spoken and written language which intersect with their personal pursuits, their civic-community participation and their economic-vocational future.

The speed and depth of economic, social and technological change on post-school life, however, requires recognition in public policy of the importance of life-long learning. It ought to be an underlying assumption of any literacy policy that literacy learning in schools should be adaptable and responsive to changing societal demands on, and uses for, literacy.

Within this broader life-long learning framework the central aim of literacy policy should be to focus national attention on Australia's school literacy achievements and in so doing to raise the literacy capabilities of all Australians by directing resources towards redressing areas of persistent underperformance.

Only a broad-based response to the problem of literacy, accompanied by a

sustained and focussed strategy and guided by an overarching policy, can hope to succeed.

From the very outset, however, it is important to state unambiguously that there is *no general literacy crisis* in Australia. There is, however, systematic underperformance in English literacy among some groups and many individuals. Among these are children and adults who are socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged, some children and adults of non-English speaking background, some groups of both urban and rural Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, older Australians with interrupted or disrupted schooling, some Australians who live in remote or isolated areas as well as some groups of sensorily, physically, emotionally or intellectually disabled Australians.

That these same groups and individuals are often seriously disadvantaged in their occupational and educational opportunities is sufficient cause to warrant a *targeted* policy on literacy. However, there is a wider literacy context that sustains a case for a *comprehensive* literacy policy.

Extraordinary changes are impacting on literacy practices, changes which derive from global economic, social, cultural and technological transformation. Just to keep pace Australian literacy standards will have to be sustained for most learners and dramatically improved for many, to enable effective participation in the vastly more competitive environment which will be a characteristic of the world in the early part of the next century.

It is critical, therefore, that there be no lowering of the goal of the achievement of sophisticated literacy competence for all by arbitrarily establishing minimal standards which, though readily achievable, would certainly in the long term prove to be both inadequate and inappropriate for the more complex, technologically-saturated and culturally diverse reading and writing environments that are already upon us. Rather, it is crucial to support a broad-ranging notion of literacy as a repertoire of capabilities which comprises the various linguistic and intellectual resources which learners

need to function at the highest and broadest levels of literacy. It is in this sense that the term *literacies* can be justified.

Literacy planning represents a unique opportunity to stimulate a nationally coordinated effort to secure actual literacy gains for all Australians. It is also time to systematically put in place a national agenda for cooperation in literacy education, research, teacher education and the monitoring of outcomes. This cooperation ought to involve the nation's education and training departments, the non-government and independent schools sectors, business, and professional, research and parent organisations.

The goal of enhancing literacy capability is not merely one for education. Literacy capability for all is a compact of citizenship, securing for all Australians the principal means for participation in democratic institutions and processes. Universal and broad literacy capability is also an investment in human development to strengthen Australian social and economic progress. Finally and ultimately it is an achievement of Australian civilisation and culture since literacy is the principal avenue for the enrichment, diversification and on-going development of a lively, distinctive and cohesive nation.

The improvement of literacy for all Australians seeks to respond to these personal, civic-cultural and economic needs.

Literacy is for personal pursuits

> Literacy and language are fundamental to all learning, whether in school or out-of-school. Individual Australians require literacy to enjoy reading and literature in its widest sense, to benefit from recreational, further education and other life-enhancing pursuits, and to participate in producing and sharing the knowledge that frames national culture and values.

Literacy is for civic and cultural participation

For Australians as citizens and as participants in, and contributors to, national culture, literacy is indispensable. Literacy enables the full activation of democratic rights and legal protection as well as facilitating the fulfilment of the responsibilities all Australians have to the evolution and betterment of the nation.

Literacy is crucial for collaboration and effective decision making, for debate and informed discussion and for the protection of individuals, especially the most vulnerable, from exploitation and manipulation.

Literacy is for the economy

At a time of rapid technological change and pervasive internationalisation literacy skills contribute to the increased competitiveness and productivity that the national economy demands. Literacy is also crucially important for innovation, for mobility and adaptation to change.

Any literacy policy for Australia must direct major attention to the economic needs for improved literacy, and in particular to the benefits in the labour market and the implications of the rapid introduction of new technologies. However, the essentially humanistic, intellectual and cultural purposes of pursuing the highest and most active forms of literacy for all Australians cannot be neglected.

Shared literacy traditions foster civic, citizenship and national identity and unity within the harmonious diversity and pluralism that characterise contemporary Australia. Literacy is also a personal achievement enriching the recreational, intellectual and cultural lives of all Australians and facilitating the pursuit in creative, scientific and artistic ideas of personal and collective imagination and goals.

English, in the forms that it has evolved in Australia and which express the unique national context and experience of the Australian people, is Australia's national, common and unifying communication medium. The remarkable international spread and prominence of English involves Australians in an interconnected web of English varieties which, however, retain mutual intelligibility for effective communication. However, Australians know and acquire literacy in other languages, using diverse writing systems, as well as learning forms of specialised literacy appropriate to particular occupational, disciplinary, social and technological domains.

These literacies also form part of the goal of an elaborate and rich matrix, or repertoire, of literacy which must be attended to in a broadly based policy.

Recently established national literacy goals

At meetings in 1996 and early 1997 Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to a national literacy and numeracy goal: *That every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.*

The Ministers also endorsed a five point National Plan. The Plan will include:

i. comprehensive assessment of all students as early as possible, to identify those students at risk of not making adequate progress towards the national numeracy and literacy goals;

ii. intervening as early as possible to address the needs of those students identified as at risk;

iii. development of national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy;

iv. assessing students against national benchmarks; and

v. progress towards towards national reporting by systems on student achievement.

The Ministers also adopted a 'sub goal': *That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.*

What issues arise in giving effect to this goal?

We argue that the central purpose of literacy planning is to stimulate action so that all education and training efforts in Australia coherently and systematically aim for a broad-ranging and sophisticated literacy capability for all Australians. This foundational literacy for all must be embedded within a wide notion of literacy as a repertoire of capabilities that include contemporary challenges in technology, cultural diversity and an internationalising economy.

A comprehensive series of measures is needed, with specific aims:

- to stimulate and support more effective literacy education in the early years of schooling, including an articulation with preschool education;
- to encourage educational practice in which explicit literacy education is the province of all teachers, at all phases of education and training, including life-long education for adults;
- to initiate and coordinate action to redress literacy difficulties encountered throughout the population and especially the separate needs of certain disadvantaged and disabled groups at all levels of education and training; and
- to ensure that the distinctive English language and literacy needs of children and adults of immigrant or indigenous background who speak languages other than English are addressed in their own right and not subsumed under mother tongue English literacy provision; and also to support and encourage wherever possible the literate development of their first languages while supporting and encouraging the literate acquisition of second languages for other Australians.

This aim is for foundational literacy capability by all Australians. It especially seeks to assist those disadvantaged or excluded from the benefits

of achieving literacy in formal schooling, for whatever reason, including disability; and combines this priority with the aim of extending an active, critical, productive and engaging literacy in the complex and mixed modes in which literacy is embedded in Australia's rapidly changing technological, cultural and economic circumstances.

Part I: Broad Context

1.1 The powers of literacy

1.1.1 Introduction

It is probably the case that at no previous stage in human social and economic history has the importance and complexity of literacy been greater nor at any past time has the interrelation between literacy capability and the development of Australia's full potential been closer. Mutually reinforcing changes deriving from international economic globalisation (especially in the wake of trade liberalisation), the rapid proliferation of sophisticated instantaneous communications technologies, and national and global cultural diversity have combined with the emergence of the 'information/knowledge society' as the bases for the economic advancement of nations. This conjunction of developments makes it necessary for there to be more intense and more complex literacy capabilities developed among all Australians and elevates the importance of sophisticated universal literacy capabilities. Further, these changes entrench text-intensive and technology-intensive processes in employment, communication and civic life and identity. Literacy as a key capability for citizens to understand and influence changes within society becomes a critical feature of a robust, participatory democracy.

Globalisation is advanced in practical terms by the effective dissolution of

communication barriers across distances. The proliferation of new communication technologies that are instantaneous and 'multi-modal' affects, by their inherent combination of previously discrete communication systems, conventional literacy practices (New London Group 1996) and combine to dissolve previously more bounded literacy practices.

The exchange of goods and services across political and economic entities has always represented an incipient form of globalisation. However, in the last two decades it has become possible to speak of a qualitatively different and pervasive phenomenon which genuinely merits the use of the term globalisation. While globalisation proceeds at the innumerable levels of human contact, three macro-forces have produced it most strongly.

The first has been the almost universal phenomenon of *market deregulation.*

The second has been the advanced integration of international *financial markets.*

The third has been the critical facilitating force of instantaneous *communications.*

The effects of globalisation are relatively clear at many levels. The cultural and educational effects of these phenomena still await us. These may range from the rapid galvanisation of the world into gigantic trading blocs (*e.g.*, the Asia Pacific Economic Community) to the emergence of shared communications systems and interdependence at political and economic levels. These blocs incorporate wide political, cultural and linguistic differences. While the results of these changes cannot be predicted with any certainty, we can be certain that participation in the new environments these changes will give rise to will require ever more complex literacy practices. Young Australians will encounter a more fluidly-bounded world as they leave education.

1.1.2 The impact of changing economic patterns.

In 1992, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

concluded that low literacy levels were a serious threat both to economic performance and social cohesion. Concerned that a lack of internationally comparable data hindered any more substantive conclusions and more appropriate policy intervention the OECD embarked on an international study of the incidence and nature of literacy problems. From this study it concluded that:

> *'In recent years, adult literacy has come to be seen as crucial to the economic performance of industrialized nations. Literacy is no longer defined merely in terms of a basic threshold of reading ability, mastered by almost all those growing up in developed countries. Rather, literacy is now seen as how adults use written information to function in society. Today, adults need a higher level of literacy to function well; society has become more complex and low-skill jobs are disappearing. Therefore, inadequate levels of literacy among a broad section of the population potentially threaten the strength of economies and the social cohesion of nations' (OECD 1995:13).*

In all sectors of industry, Australian businesses have recently faced the consequences of the introduction of new technologies, which have led to more rapid exchanges in information. These in turn call on individuals in workplaces to engage, as readers, interpreters and writers, in communication practices that are increasingly complex and evolving rapidly and on which business competitiveness increasingly depends. These practices affect work at every level of the economy.

Primary producers are currently under increasing pressure to use advanced technologies to plan their work and to predict how certain choices will affect the success of their efforts. They use these technologies to communicate directly with national and international market places to ensure they have up to date information to conduct their activities with respect to stocking, land usage, buying and selling. New collaborative ventures among primary producers and economic and agricultural advisers, often spanning nations and continents and involving both government and non-government agencies,

are increasingly important and rely for their success on sophisticated literate practices.

Secondary manufacturers also confront new demands in their work. They increasingly require flexible workers able to participate in the collaborative processes which micro-economic reform has made obligatory for competitive performance. These processes demand language and literacy skills sufficient to allow new learning and the application of new procedures to plant and equipment and occupational health and safety or for environmental compliance regimes.

The *tertiary and services sector* similarly has embraced new forms of communication, allowing and thus demanding rapid service provision and the maximisation of human resources. Services and tourism are the fastest growing sectors of the economy, generating more employment than the traditional mainstays of Australian enterprise, but necessarily engaging with a more culturally and linguistically diverse population of potential and actual consumers and clients. Furthermore there is the internationalisation of the Australian secondary and tertiary education sectors with the emergence of the provision of English-medium education as a large and growing source of revenue.

Quaternary industries, which, by their very nature, trade in information, deploy a wide range of literacy practices in the assembling, storage and timely transfer of clear and accessible information. The special *registers* of language demanded in these domains, which go well beyond the most obvious manifestations of jargon, require particular but structured and predictable writing *genres*. The use of these *genres* by quaternary workers demands both an 'on the job' language acquisition skills as well as a high level of transferable skill-readiness based on general literacy functioning.

The critical driving force of Australian workplace reform is the vastly more competitive global trading environment to which Australia is increasingly exposed. Australian workplaces that have succeeded in attaining interna-

tional quality standards are now highly competitive; for those that fail to attain international quality standards the commercial prospects are increasingly bleak.

An important effect of such market pressures has been generalised micro-economic restructuring and various forms of 'multi-skilling'. A major part of the latter has been the widespread adoption of workteams. Workteams address productivity, efficiency and safety issues. Workteams crucially depend on communication effectiveness, often in cross-cultural settings, and therefore make more salient questions of language and literacy in both English and other languages, intercultural awareness and translation and interpreting services.

Rigid workplace environments which have dominated for most of this century, sometimes called Fordist, are being replaced by 'post-Fordist' work environments. Post-Fordist work organisation patterns make talk and written language important. Some of the organisational forms these workplaces take are quality circles, self-managing work teams, and review and feedback sessions. Among the outcomes envisaged are improved occupational health and safety, increases in productivity, enhanced product quality and the inculcation of corporate loyalty.

Optimistic readings of such transformations see economies in which individual opportunities abound and in which societies become learning societies (Senge 1991). More problematically these changes may entrench unequal national as well as personal distribution of work (Reich 1992).

Personal and group qualities such as problem-solving capacities, preparedness to change and adapt, flexibility and initiative are encouraged. Other processes intensify these trends: the 'fast capitalism' notions of just-in-time learning and production, customer sovereignty, total quality management and high-performance workplaces. It is now commonplace in management journals to speak of the 'culture' of enterprises and the entrepreneurship of individuals.

In these developments flatter hierarchies are favoured over more traditional pyramidal structures and the attachment and loyalty of workers to vision and mission statements, and corporate identity, are brought about via processes of consultation and negotiation. Workplaces are sometimes described as learning sites and located in a knowledge-based post industrial network of interdependencies. The multiple skills required of workers are higher, greater and deeper than in Fordist workplaces where the metaphor of the production line described better the relation of employees to their work. Education and training are indispensably important for the successful realisation of these strategies. In the highly heterogenous workplaces typical of urban Australia successful participation in environments where these changes are occurring is contingent upon language and literacy and cross-cultural competencies (New London Group 1996).

Most Australian workplaces sit somewhere between a Fordist and Post-Fordist model, meaning that workers' abilities to handle text-saturated contexts is all the more important.

Such transformations mean that the 'old basics' of literacy and numeracy no longer come close to coping with the needs of Australian industry. The needs of Australian economic and industrial functioning now place qualitatively new and more complex demands on workers' literacy practices. Changes internal to writing also reflect these developments. Writing now tends to contain information coded in graphic, diagrammatic, tabular and other non-textual ways, calling for a repertoire of capabilities far beyond the typical reader and writer of decades ago (Resnick and Resnick 1977).

It is therefore a view of the multiplicity of skills required of potential members of the new-literate economy that must inform Australian literacy policies.

1.1.3 The impact of communication technologies

Contemporary communications systems are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from those we have been accustomed to in the past. Their

widespread availability combines with their pervasive social and economic effect, *i.e.*, they are not restricted to particular enterprises nor to discrete domains of life (OECD 1988, 1992a). Their wide availability and impact across whole communities has resulted in major growth in their use: between 1988 and 1992 international telecommunications traffic grew by more than ten percent in each year (OECD 1996).

Perhaps the principal qualitative difference between present technological change and all past ones is the multiple modalities which communications technologies incorporate. Information technologies combining multiple modes of communication tend to create hybrid systems of communication. Simultaneous reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are demanded. Voice activation and instruction of some computers, screen-based control of machines and other written language innovations blur the boundaries between previously discrete literacy and spoken language activities such as handwriting, printed text, gesture, voice, images and other symbol-laden communication systems.

Visual, audial, gestural and spatial patterns are available to interacting humans as potential 'meaning-making' tools and information and communications technologies draw on these in combinations which generate original literacies for their utilisation.

A possible indicator of the literacy effects of communication media is greater informality within writing. The use of increasingly interpersonal modes of language and increased orality in writing (oral-like writing) has also been found to extend subsequently into more traditional literacy practices. Electronic mail and Internet Relay Chat groups, or 'rooms', reduce temporal distance in writing thus producing more of the immediacy of speech in the forms of writing these given rise to (Sproull and Kaiser 1991; Kress 1995).

Multimedia technology requires of a competent and literate user receptive skills more elaborate than those of 'pen and paper' literacy and far more complex in the productive use. Indeed even this distinction, already known

to be somewhat forced in verbal literacy, becomes close to untenable in multimedia environments. Reading in the non-linear format of multimedia electronic 'texts' involves navigational skills far beyond those demanded of print and an evaluative and critical awareness to select and bring together relevant pieces of information in their various presentational forms from diverse parts of the 'text'. In such literacy practices 'reading' becomes a form of 'composition' as the reader becomes a manager and formulator of information sources in the different formats in which they appear.

However, we must temper any excitement about computers heralding " ... unfettered individual exploration of the far-flung realms of creativity and knowledge ... " with the equally probable possibility of '... increased social control through surveillance centralised record-keeping and software audits" (Christie, Devlin, Freebody, Luke, Martin, Threadgold and Walton, 1991: 212).

In any case the multimedia format of texts and new forms of writing and reading with computers do not mean the wholesale overthrow of past textual practices. While technology-enhanced communications do generate specific literacy practices and routines at the same time they "...carry within them discernible patterns of our textual past" (Daly 1996: 14). The specific challenge they carry for literacy education is how to impart general literacy capability which is transferable to the computer medium and the need to also address the specifics of digital text literacy.

To identify the knowledge, skills and strategies necessary for handling the convergent, digital texts in computer-mediated educational settings it is helpful to see print literacy education as an extending repertoire which now encompasses digital texts. Like print texts digital texts are *products*, which emerge from and are used in *processes* of human interaction and are integrated into wider social *practices* (Corbel 1996). Literacy in the computer age will therefore require multimedia authoring skills, multimedia critical analysis, internet exploration strategies and internet navigational skills (Lemke 1996).

These developments in communication technologies coincide with the cultural diversity that results from globalisation and with deep organisational change in the world of work. The resultant pattern for literacy practices is the emergence of an integrated and dense web of culturally and commercially diverse modes of life each of which utilises a repertoire of communication forms.

Place and space, locality and setting, are both real and virtual as the expanding use of tele-working, tele-commuting, tele-shopping, electronic publishing and other fields testify. An interesting instance of this is the location within Ireland of very large international multilingual, instantaneous customer servicing operations for European and Asian firms (McIntosh 1996: 56).

The overall effect of new communications technologies is that literate practices are being altered in pervasive and profound ways but which still demand a transferable literacy capability from schooling.

1.1.4 The impact of global and national cultural diversity

The rapid internationalisation of economic life (and the emergence today of an historically unique and almost total global interdependence) and the concomitant vast movement of peoples, now at unprecedentedly high levels, have led to most societies becoming ethnically diverse (Castles and Miller 1993).

Population mobility intensifies globalisation through the interaction of unique mixes of indigenous, settler and immigrant populations. At the same time among the fastest growing 'industries' in both Australia and the world are education services and mass tourism, two forms of population mobility. Professionals and skilled workers of all types have therefore joined the movement of populations across and within borders which used more traditionally to be the preserve of the displaced, the poor and the refugee.

The acceleration of global population mobility results in the staging of career,

education and retirement life patterns across countries and continents. Such multi-national staging of family and professional lives is facilitated by multiple personal identification documents, including passports. These developments challenge some traditional roles of schooling, those based on the inculcation of the heritage and traditions of the nation and an attachment to local cultural values to a singular and permanent body of citizens.

Assumptions about what learners bring to the task of learning, from phonological patterns, to preschool writing and text awareness, to background cultural knowledge and experiences of literacy, are not the same among all Australian students. Some come to school highly literate in languages that utilise utterly different reading and writing conventions from those of English, others have orally rich systems in which some oral language functions mirror literary texts in their production and interpretation.

Four major recent changes confront Australian public institutions:

- Australia's progressive shift from relative geographic and communications isolation to full participation in globalised cultural and multinational economic relations via fast media, transportations infrastructure, and telecommunications;

- a change from exclusively British cultural and political orientations and attachments to those affiliated with North America, the Asian region and other Pacific Rim countries;

- the rapid transformation of the national economy from a resource and agriculture-based economy with protected, traditional markets to a post-industrial and internationally exposed economy that increasingly is required to compete for markets and resources, across a range of primary, manufacturing, service and information sectors; and

- finally, the peaceful and broadly successful emergence of an overtly multicultural and multilingual population. This is the result of

> successive waves of postwar immigration, the recognition of indigenous citizenship and entitlements, and the move away from assimilationist social policy (adapted from Green, Hodgens and Luke 1994: 7).

Although such changes are remarkable in reach and depth they interact with an enduring core of institutionalised administrative, legal, political and cultural traditions and practices. The result is a dynamic interaction between change and stability that the open democratic ethos of Australian society has facilitated. All this has major implications for Australian literacy because of the diverse content on which it draws.

First, the *topics* of materials to be read and written are more diverse in origin and form. The comparatively simple function of past literacy practices which aimed in large part to re-present the society's values and norms as secure and natural now makes space for diversity. Cultural differences are increasingly treated as acceptable, typical and productive.

Second, globalisation impacts on the *functions* of literacy. There are multiple literary forms, scripts, culturally, religiously and socially validated functions and practices to reading and writing in contemporary Australia. Text directionality is a simple instance of this. This concerns how different writing systems are presented as text on paper, in vertical or horizontal arrangement, right to left or left to right, or on the computer screen where writing 'scrolls' rather than moves left-right as it does in printed English (Corbel 1996: 10). Even simple conventions of this sort provide potential insights into the arbitrary nature of text-practices and constitute useful knowledge for Australian learners of reading and writing.

For almost two decades public policy in Australia has evolved a broadly shared consensus on the three dimensions which shape national culture:

- the continuity of Australia's British-derived legal, political and administrative arrangements, including the cohesive function of

English as the national language;

- the acceptance of the value and benefits of demographic diversity produced through external immigration added to settler and indigenous populations; and

- the necessity of Australia's economic integration into the Asia-Pacific region.

1.2 How literate are Australians?

It appears that literacy has always been a topic of debate in Australia. Concerns for the low levels of literacy among adults surfaced in the Australian Army Education Service during World War Two (Nelson 1989: 4). Claims of declining literacy standards in schools reach back at least to 1909 (ALLC 1995: 18).

Since 1945, literacy debates have accelerated and what is meant by the literate person has changed. Green *et al* (1994) identify phases in literacy debates in which the 'literate subject' has changed dramatically. During the 1950s the 'ideal literate person' was construed as a *moral* subject, during the 1960s as a *technical/skilled* subject, during the 1970s the main understanding of the literate person focussed on a *deficit/disadvantaged* subject and by the 1980s the association between education and economic restructuring was strongly made and accordingly the literate person was conceived as an *economic* subject.

The first comprehensive survey of adult literacy in Australia was, significantly, entitled *No Single Measure* (Wickert 1989). This survey involved a sample the youngest of whose respondents would have left primary school in 1981-82, the oldest around the time of the First World War.

No Single Measure was an initiative funded under the *National Policy on Languages'* (Lo Bianco 1987) Adult Literacy Action Campaign. It examined prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. It found that two

segments of the population had the greatest literacy problems. The first were those who had attended school for fewer than six years. The second group were people older than sixty. The overall estimate of people with literacy or numeracy difficulties was approximately one million. This figure of one million adult Australians who experience literacy difficulties featured prominently in 1990, the International Year of Literacy (DEET 1992).

In Wickert's study thirty-one percent of respondents nominated 'health problems' as the reasons for the literacy difficulties they encountered, twenty percent nominated reasons to do with socio-economic constraints, seventeen percent nominated variously caused absences from school, nineteen percent traced their literacy difficulties to 'attitudes' towards school. Various forms of disability, parental influence, English language difficulties and other factors were found to account for a variation of less than ten percent each.

Overall the survey found that the great majority of Australian adults were able to perform straightforward literacy tasks but that many were unable to complete tasks of moderate complexity.

Ten percent of the sample failed to achieve at all on quantitative literacy (numeracy), with this dimension consistently revealing poorest performance; one percent of the sample had such low literacy levels that they were not asked to continue with the assessment. The best predictor of literacy performance was found to be the current level of literacy activity; giving support to the adage: *Use it or lose it!*

In 1992 the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, issued a report entitled *The Literacy Challenge.* The Standing Committee's report stated that " It is unacceptable that ten to twenty percent of children finish primary school with literacy problems" (p v) and later went on to state that "From the Committee's discussions and submissions, it seems that a figure of twenty five percent of students at risk may be a more accurate figure for many education districts" (House of

Representatives 1992: 3). These claims were based on extrapolations from the Wickert study, from 'discussions and submissions' and from anecdotal evidence. Evidence from the education authorities follows.

The Victorian Board of Studies introduced the Learning Assessment Project (LAP) in 1995 for students in Years 3 and 5 in all government and Catholic schools and many independent schools in that state. Each year English and Mathematics are assessed together with one other Key Learning Area. The assessment tasks are based on the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) levels appropriate for Years 3 and 5. The CSF provides the framework for curriculum delivery in Victoria and describes learning outcomes to be achieved in the eight Key Learning Areas.

In 1996 LAP was undertaken by more than 99,000 students, ninety-three percent of eligible students. The results show that in English about ninety percent of students are operating at or above the expected level. Girls outperformed boys, although the top ten percent of boys performed as well as the top ten percent of girls. According to the Board of Studies these results indicate that high standards in literacy are being maintained (Board of Studies, LAP Assessment Project 1996, Key Points, undated).

In New South Wales the Department of School Education conducts annual literacy and numeracy Basic Skills Testing at different year levels (see section 6.7). In 1992 and 1993 a Year Six Basic Skills Test found that more than half of all students performed so well that they were grouped into the two highest of the five available bands of performance. Less than one percent were located in the lowest group, Band 0. The then Director of Curriculum commented that " ... these results are cause for great satisfaction" (Lynch, L., *Telegraph Mirror*, August 7 1993: 7).

Over the 1989-1994 period of testing under the Basic Skills Test Program the state-wide mean score shows a slight upward trend in literacy attainment. Ranked on a scale of 25-65 the average score of all Year 6 students who sat the test (a high percentage) was 1989: 48.5; 1990: 47.8; 1991: 48.9; 1992:

48.1; 1993: 48.3; and in 1994: 49. When grouped into skill bands these mean scores show a very positive literacy performance in NSW (NSW Department of School Education Basic Skills Testing Program).

However, recent evidence from a reading comprehension survey by the Australian Council for Educational Research as part of its Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth Program is far less sanguine. Reporting these findings *The Age* in a front page article stated: "A 20-year study of 14-year-olds has found that almost one-third have inadequate basic literacy skills" (Willox, I., One in Three Struggle to Read, *The Age*, 22 October 22 1996) while *The Australian*, also in a front page article, declared: "... one in three Year 9 students did not have basic literacy skills" (Jones, C. One in three Year 9 students lack literacy skills, *The Australian*, 22 October 1996).

The reading comprehension study surveyed 13, 000 students in 1995 in all States and Territories and compared the results with a similar, though not identical, study of some 5, 000 students in 1975, 1980 and 1989. It found a declining reading comprehension rate for boys compared with girls and only a miniscule improvement for students for whom English is a second language. Thirty percent of all students, thirty-five percent of all boys, twenty-seven percent of all girls and fifty-one percent of students from homes where English was not the main language spoken were considered not to have achieved a satisfactory result in reading comprehension tests (Williams, Clancy, Batten and Girling-Butcher 1980, Williams, Long, Carpenter and Hayden 1993a, and Williams *et al* 1993b, Kemp 1996). There is dispute however about the claims made for the survey's findings (Toohey, B., Reading and righting literacy test 'wrongs', *The Australian Financial Review*, 3 November 1996).

During 1997 more light will be shed on aspects of the literacy capability of Australians, both adults and students. In mid 1997 the results of the first *National Schools English Literacy Survey* in 16 years, conducted during late 1996 and assessing progress against the curriculum profiles in the domains of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing, will become available.

Australia has also participated, through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the second international *Aspects of Literacy Survey* being conducted by the OECD in collaboration with Statistics Canada. This study, also known as the *International Adult Literacy Survey*, will contrast data from Canada, the United States, Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, Ireland and New Zealand.

These studies will provide important indicators and benchmarks. These will establish a base against which future assessments of the outcomes from literacy education in school and post-school settings can be considered.

Evidence about the literacy capability of Australians is at best fragmentary; at worst contradictory. A large number of variables shapes the answers to the question of the level of general literacy among Australians. The precise question asked, what definition of literacy is used, what is valued in literate practice and how literacy is construed and understood determine what is measured and how.

We can simultaneously assert with confidence that there is no *generalised literacy crisis* in Australia and state that there are *serious and consistent literacy performance problems* among some groups and many individuals.

It is overridingly the case, however, that all Australians now require deeper, broader and higher literacy capabilities than at any time in the past. These two understandings frame the approach of the sort of literacy policy that we advocate.

1.3 Citizenship, social equity and competence

Australia has a proud record in many aspects of literacy education. For many years, Australian teachers, educational administrators, policy makers, and researchers have been among the world's leaders in addressing questions of literacy pedagogy. Australians purchase more books on a *per capita* basis and support more technical journals than most other nations. Australia has also produced more successful children's authors per head of population

(indicating a highly literate children's culture) than most nations and every year tens of thousands of young people sufficiently literate to undertake university studies cannot be accommodated in higher education institutions because of quotas (Cambourne 1996).

While most Australians' literacy needs are well served by schools, universities and training institutions many Australians do not have their needs and aspirations met by current conventions of literacy education. Even high rates of success become harder to maintain as literacy itself comes increasingly to represent a constellation of related, but distinctive, manipulations of symbolic communications which have a relatively autonomous relationship with spoken language. This change *within the code*, as it were, coincides with the greater diversity of the users of English, the multilingualism of Australians and global economic and cultural integration as identified in previous sections, *i.e. changes external to the code.*

Moreover, some of the more recent results of assessments in schools and among adults of the literacy problems give no grounds for complacency in attending to literacy success for all students and adult Australians.

While it is essential that educational authorities seek to ensure that legitimate concerns about the foundational features of literacy - 'the old basics' of reading and writing - are addressed it is crucially important that these concerns do not obscure either the wider senses of literacy (outlined in Part II below) or the changing demands on literacy caused by advances in technology and changes in the economy and society. Reading and writing programs that combine and adapt the appropriate cultural resources of their communities with explicit attention to the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* evident in public literate exchange have the greatest potential to assist all Australians to become more fully and actively literate.

While the foundational features of literacy are essential for active literate performance and must be a central goal of schooling for all children on its own foundational literacy is an insufficient aim for national policy. Even so,

foundational literacy is more than the 'old basics' with a new name. In addition to the 'old basics' the term foundational comprises reading comprehension, structuring and sequencing pieces of written language, making enabling and relevant inferences, a growing critical understanding of what is read or written, competence with computers, keyboards and a familiarity with multimedia texts.

No society aware of the deep and complex implications of international macro-economic transformation can accept that 'the old basics' can be sufficient. This transformation has produced a multi-polar world, one in which great centres of economic power residing in non-English, non-Western civilisations have joined Western English-speaking nations in global commercial and, increasingly, in cultural impact. This implies a vast and inescapable cultural diversity in all parts of the globe as well as a rapid expansion in the production of new knowledge. This new knowledge is generated within fields of research and innovation that contain literacy conventions as access codes.

It is an imperative of Australian economic competitiveness that we also aim for high levels of a universal cultural and critically-aware literacy in addition to the foundational literacy capability for all. This imperative is reinforced by the traditions of participatory democracy, freedom of speech and assembly and a mixed economy which define Australia's unique place in the world and which derive from the liberal tradition of individual rights within communities unified by common political citizenship. Effective and democratic communication within this society requires shared literacy capabilities.

The literacy policy we put forward outlines the bases for re-emphasising and redefining 'the basics' in ways that aim to ensure the secure establishment and maintenance of *foundational* capabilities, but that also views them as only a foundation for the building of the literacy resources needed for effective communication in the present and as a preparation for the communication demands of the future.

These 'new foundations' of literacy are:

- the ability to understand increasingly complex language and literacy *codes*;
- the ability to use the multiple *modes* in which those codes are transmitted and put to use; and
- the capacity to understand and generate the richer and more elaborate *meanings* they convey.
- The above represent the main headings for *foundational* of literacy.

By *codes* is meant the grapho-numeric designs that together make up messages: the inter-relationships among the varying conventions and formats of script, number, and diagram. These inter-relationships now entail multiple conventions and often multiple script systems, as well as computer-generated messages that offer many possible ways of reading, over and above left-to-right and word-by-word reading. From the static word on the page to the 'moving', multi-modal communication event, Australians need broad and flexible access to the diverse codes of modern literate communication.

Similarly, the book and the letter have been joined by multiple forms of communication, new *modes*, that often allow new forms of interaction with the originator of the message. Electronic mail is one of the more common forms of this, but so are the use of complex logos and signs in public spaces, along with the 'reading' of traditional and modern art forms and the media, both electronic and print (Kress 1995). The burgeoning growth of the internet and world wide web, which have generated original forms of writing with practices that would be considered inappropriate in more conventional forms, are the most evident instance of this development.

Finally, the expanding options for readers and writers presented by diverse *codes* and *modes* presents new options for making *meanings*, and places new demands on the contemporary reader and writer. A major aspect of those

demands relates to interpreting messages with several possible meanings, built on diverse cultural assumptions, and thus calling for a repertoire of reading and writing capabilities, different adaptations to the task of becoming a fully participating 'reader and writer'.

Issues of citizenship and social equity are inextricably raised in connection with literacy. In encompassing these issues, however, policy must, at the same time, lead to practical action aimed at enhancing literacy capabilities and participation of all young people. A program of action will need to be based on approaches that are explicit, sound, and broadly understandable. Wholehearted educational effort aimed at the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* of literacy will be reinvigorated the more deeply the role of literacy in a cultural and economic future that is broadly skilled, equitable and pluralistic is recognised. One starting point for literacy policy in contemporary Australia, then, is that these efforts now take place in a world that requires more integrated, complex, and dynamic forms of communication, where literacy skills can be viewed as facilitating communication.

The languages of literacy in all societies are standardised and powerful, invoking cultural prestige but also, as a consequence of the imperative of standardisation, formal processes of codification, dissemination of the norms of codification (spelling, grammar, punctuation along with 'tolerance rules' for the violation of such norms). Personal and communal power and status derive from control of society's most powerful tools for handling knowledge. Differential access to these socially stratified and stratifying literate practices can exacerbate existing social inequalities; more equitable access can diminish them or ameliorate the depth of their effects. Foundational literacy provides for learners to acquire a repertoire of capabilities in literate practices which includes the socially and economically powerful and prestigious forms.

Indeed literacy itself, introduced into the language ecology of indigenous settings in the Pacific, including indigenous Australia, has had the effect of promoting transition from low to high information societies and to long term

information storage. These deep cultural effects displace the face to face and immediate interaction required in oral societies and substitute these with more distanced and time separated modes of communication. These effects have often eroded the basis of indigenous languages, conceptually restructured communities' views of time, impacted on their sense of human agency versus structure as the causative forces in nature and in other ways deeply eroded the cultural basis for indigenous languages, often leading to a reduction in spoken language diversity and the extinction of many languages (Mühlhäusler 1996).

Spoken language diversity in Australia is nevertheless very great. It involves non-prestige forms of intergenerationally stable English, i.e., dialects of Australian English, other than the language linguists call Standard Australian English, and a very large number of distinct languages, many with complex, sophisticated and ancient literacy traditions. The use of family-inherited languages among young Australians is extremely variable.

Conceptualising literacy as a *repertoire of capabilities* appropriate to given contexts assists in reconciling the gap between popular forms of language which serve functions of identity and group solidarity on the one hand and the standardised and public norms which are required in formal settings such as schooling.

The responsibility entailed in public education in literacy relates to these two dimensions. The literacy practices and indeed the texts that are produced within the norms and conventions of the society's mandated literacy practices confirm some groups' norms, style and practices, while marginalising others. It is important to acknowledge such issues; standardised written language is a cultural and political choice. Once it is made and affirmed, it follows that public authorities have an obligation to guarantee to all citizens equitable access to this instrument of power, knowledge and opportunity.

This is a protection for individuals against exploitation and manipulation as

well as an issue of the richer and wider quality of life. The expansion of specialised and globalised knowledge in societies with detailed linguistic divisions of labour will probably ensure a persistent divide between the language of professions, trades, arts, and administration and governance on the one hand and popular usage on the other. Recent moves to Plain English might partly bridge the information and communication gulf that results, but there will remain a divide for reasons of disciplinary focus and specialist knowledge among professional and other groups.

In competition for jobs, status and information, the control of forms of language, both written and spoken, is an increasingly important determinant of success; leading to either participation or exclusion. Written representations of language closely reflect the particular cultural norms, practices and beliefs of some groups, and less closely reflect those of other groups. Some values are given salience and others are relegated to the background. Social equity requires that educators and policy makers frame literacy policy in ways that provide universal access to and competent use of the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* of literate communication.

Both diversity and standardisation are deeply involved in Australia's capability to participate flexibly and take the lead in industrial and economic developments, domestically and internationally. Both are necessary for access to valued communication patterns within Australia.

Our view of literacy education is driven by a view of productive diversity, (Cope and Kalantzis 1997), i.e., making the pluralism of Australia's population work cohesively in the interests of the nation, on three fronts: the linguistic and cultural diversity of Australian students; the growing diversity of the *codes, modes* and *meanings* that literacy will call upon; and the rapidly expanding global connections for Australian culture and its economy.

Part II: What a National Policy on literacy should say

2.1 The policy context

Australia is unique among English speaking nations in its efforts to develop a comprehensive national policy on language (Romaine 1990: 8; Ozolins 1993). The first explicit language policy being issued in 1987.

Shaping national policy would be related policy initiatives in language and literacy, for example: *Towards Active Voice, Report of the Committee of Review of the Adult Migrant Education Program* (Campbell 1985), the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) and especially its Adult Literacy Action Campaign, initiatives which emerged from Australia's participation in International Year of Literacy 1990, *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (Dawkins 1991) and the *National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy.*

The *National Policy on Languages* and the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* which succeeded it, in their different ways, comprehensively addressed language and literacy planning for Australia: English, Australian languages, Community and Foreign languages, interpreting and translating.

In replacing *The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, governments need

to acknowledge the on-going policy commitments to areas outside their direct brief for literacy. Any new policy framework must work in conjunction with the continuing importance of wider language questions and the on-going policy commitments to these. State and Territory and non-government and independent sector policies and initiatives are critically important as well. These are set out in **Part VI** below.

In addition there are collaborative policy initiatives. These have had a deep impact on language and literacy education. Especially important in adult education are the National Training Reform Agenda, the establishment of the National Training Board in 1990 and the Australian National Training Authority 1994 and, for school education, the national collaboration which emerged from the 1989 Hobart Declaration: *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia*, which was issued by the then Australian Education Council.

From the Hobart Declaration collaboration on curriculum mapping and the writing of curriculum frameworks, the National Statement and Profiles, are especially important developments. These were developed between 1991 and 1993 and have since been adapted and implemented in various ways according to the needs and priorities of education jurisdictions.

Eight Key Learning Area (KLA) curriculum Statements and Profiles provide a framework for curriculum development and for the enhancement of teaching and learning. In addition these encourage a 'common language' for reporting student achievement. Within each Process Strands identify 'ways of thinking and knowing' particular to the Key Learning Area while Content Strands establish the body of knowledge for each KLA. Progression in learning is represented through bands in which typical sequences are identified.

2.2 Purpose and scope

The development of new initiatives in literacy policy must be motivated by the legitimate interest of public authorities in the education of Australians

for a future in which their society will be economically more competitive, culturally diverse and inter-dependent on its own internal resources and on other nations with an increasing need for more effective internal communication.

With respect to all levels of formal education the Commonwealth Government has an urgent stake in the extent and completeness of the literacy capabilities of Australians, and thus in the outcomes from and comprehensiveness of literacy education provision.

Inevitably literacy policy must also respond to concerns that standards of literacy attainment, in the broad sense set out in section 1.3 above, need to be raised, and moreover to the concern that there are predictable sections of the Australian community for whom there has been, intergenerationally, poor access to literacy achievement. The goals then are for *foundational literacy for all Australians*, i.e. a universal foundational success with literacy, as well as for *culturally rich literacy for all Australians*.

2.3 Definitions

The term *national* as we use it here has a particular meaning. The term is not synonymous with Commonwealth or Federal. Rather it refers to the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in partnership. The first partners in planning for literacy improvements are the educational and training jurisdictions which have primary carriage of schooling and training within Australia. The Commonwealth Government has a particular interest deriving from the close association of literacy competency with the economic efficiency, social justice, immigration and indigenous affairs responsibilities it uniquely carries, as well as the cultural and international consequences of literacy. Partnership is also shared with students, parents and employers who have a vital interest in the success and quality of literacy education. Finally, educational professionals (school, university and adult education teachers, trainers, teacher educators and researchers) are interested in the nature and efficacy of literacy education.

Literacy can be taken to mean the whole range of practices which surround and give effect to written language. Written language is the *grapho-numeric* representation of sound symbols. Effective literacy draws on a repertoire of resources which allows learners to:

- to *break the code*, including what sounds are represented by what letters or groups of letters, what punctuation markers signify, and what the conventional graphic design and format of different texts signify, what graphic symbols represent in different technological texts;

- to *participate in the meanings* of text, including understanding and composing meaningful texts, using grammar conventionally to understand and build meaning, and knowing word meanings;

- to *use texts* functionally, including the different social functions of different kinds of texts and how these functions shape the ways texts are structured, their tone, degree of formality, and its sequence of components; and

- to *analyse texts critically*, including asking the questions, 'How is this text trying to influence me?', 'If I am reading it, how is positioning me with respect to the writer?' and 'If I am writing it, how am I positioning the reader with respect to me?', and, most generally, 'What does this do to me?' (Freebody and Luke, 1990).

The approach to literacy set out above acknowledges and distils research findings, reflection and the experience of teachers of literacy over the past half century in Australia. However it is crucial that we do not construe readers and writers merely as 'recipients' of texts, or generically established types of texts. Underlying all literacy theory in educational contexts must be an overriding concern for teaching and the goal of active and informed democratic citizenship for all. Literacy is also for acting on and in the world, not merely receiving, however critically, its forms.

The framework of the four resources is seen in conjunction with the operation of literacy through the *codes, modes* and *meanings* (these ought to form the foundational literacy goal of national policy for literacy) and an educational aim of active and participating citizenry. This governing definition then, of a foundational literacy for all with new literacies that emerge from the *codes, modes* and *meanings* that require higher and broader public policy commitment to literacy is further developed in sections 2.4 to 2.5 below.

The term *policy* is used in two senses; the first is the more narrow program of action notion which must accompany any announced policy intention. The wider sense of the term *policy* is of a future-oriented elaboration of principles on which researchers, practitioners and policy makers may wish to include in their thinking and practice about literacy education. The immediate goal of literacy policy must be to bring about a more systematic and comprehensive literacy provision for all Australians.

The term *grammar* is often used in discussions of literacy teaching. One popular view of literacy problems is that grammar was once taught, that grammar has been abandoned, and that this is the cause of literacy problems that young people are experiencing. There are different notions and conceptions of grammar which are used by teachers and researchers to understand how language works.

There are at least three different conceptions of grammar: *traditional, formal* (after Noam Chomsky) and *functional* (derived from M.A.K. Halliday). Functional grammar addresses the linguistic system and structure in texts (spoken and written) and connects these with the social purpose of the text. It is sometimes described as a social semiotics, or meaning system. Proponents of functional grammar claim that it is very useful in education and contrast its use with *progressivism*, an educational approach in which processes of immersion in rich language and literacy experiences largely substitutes for explicit teaching of the language (Gerot and Wignell 1994). Formal grammar is a system of language description undertaken by linguists which does not aim to be applied in educational contexts. Traditional

grammar analyses parts of speech and describes the formal properties of language (Martin and Rothery, 1993).

When the term grammar is used in this document the meaning is specified.

2.4 Defining literacy

There are, similarly, many definitions of literacy (Harris and Hodges 1995). The Victorian Department of School Education's joint project with the Catholic Education Office of Victoria, expresses the dilemma which arises as:

> *"Definitions of literacy are notoriously difficult to compose. Literacy is a social construct, a complex idea that means different things to different cultural groups at different times. Therefore literacy is a relative term and dynamic. While literacy is popularly understood to denote the ability to read and write prose and other print texts, it is an integrated complex of language and thinking processes and skills, incorporating a range of habits, attitudes, interests and knowledge, serving a range of purposes in different contexts"*
> *(DSE/CEOV 1994: 329).*

Much energy has been expended on efforts to reach categorical and conclusive definition of literacy. Some scholars believe that "... agreement on a definition and thus on a measurement of literacy will never be reached ... " (Wickert 1992: 30).

Definitions of literacy typically range from skills-based conceptions of functional literacy through to very broad and all-encompassing definitions which integrate social and political empowerment. While definitions vary greatly it is necessary to develop some coherent understanding of literacy that reflects the many capabilities required to become a participating member of a literate society. It is important at the same time not to lose sight of the practical task that faces literacy educators and students.

Over the last thirty years, psychologists, linguists, educationists, sociolo-

gists and others have all contributed to knowledge about literacy.

Definitions have differed on a number of dimensions:

- whether or not literacy refers to a set of *varied capabilities* or to a *single capability* that can be quantified (*e.g.*, into 'levels of ability') in a straightforward and comprehensive way;

- whether or not literacy refers to capabilities distinct from other language-related activities; and

- the extent to which acquisition of certain 'basic' literacy capabilities is an insurance against all possible literacy problems.

Some prominent definitions of literacy include:

1. *(L)iteracy is a characteristic acquired by individuals in varying degrees from just above none to an indeterminate upper level. Some individuals are more literate or less literate than others, but it is really not possible to speak of literate and illiterate persons as two distinct categories. (UNESCO 1957, cited in Oxenham 1980);*

2. *A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development. (UNESCO EWLP: cited in Oxenham 1980);*

3. *The concepts 'functional literacy' and 'functional illiteracy' were introduced to distinguish the higher-order level of abilities that separates those who are barely able to read and write ('basic illiterates') from those who are able to use their skills to function fully in*

the workplace, the community, and at home ('functional literates) (OECD 1992b: 18);

4. *Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing (Dawkins 1991: 5);*

5. *The very notion of literacy has evolved; in addition to reading and writing and numeracy skills, people now also require technological and computer literacy, environmental literacy, and social competence. Educational institutions have a major role to play in preventing the social and economic exclusion, and cultural alienation, that can result from a lack of appropriate literacy skills. (OECD 1996: 39).*

In these definitions, literacy is portrayed variously as a quantifiable continuum of acquisitions, a set of unspecified knowledge and skills that enable 'developmental' community functioning, a hierarchy of abilities, and a mixture of language and cognitive 'integrations' in and around 'reading and writing'. The circularity built into some of these definitions is an indication of the difficulty of drawing boundaries around the things individuals and societies have come to be able to do with the technology of writing and the attitudes and knowledge associated with those activities.

Each definition gives literacy practices a distinctive part to play in personal, community, and national development. As an important instance, each has something slightly different to say about the possible positive economic and cultural gains to be had from enhanced literacy capabilities among citizens and workers. This relationship has been the object of much debate (Fuller, Edwards and Gorman 1987).

One of the main conclusions from those debates concerns the outcomes of different types of programs. The way that investment in literacy education provides a return, primarily, in enhanced economic productivity, and secondarily, to enhanced personal fulfilment and democracy in workplaces

and communities, depends critically on *what type of literacy education has been provided.*

It is clear from the self-criticism of the outcomes of expensive literacy education programs, specifically the *Experimental World Literacy Program* (UNESCO 1976) that narrow 'functional' approaches to literacy, which focus on the 'old basics' in isolation, or which try to give only minimal work-related competencies to workers, invariably fail. Functionality in the funded programs of EWLP was defined in such narrow ways as to make the programs of little relevance to the lives of the targeted learners.

On the one hand, the functional approach was solely linked to improving productivity in key sectors of the economy and targeted populations working in those sectors. On the other hand, programs sponsored by UNESCO or countries undergoing major social reform adopted a mass coverage approach, intended for everyone, with a clear message that wider quality of life would be improved through learning to read and write.

The frank conclusion from evaluations of these experiments is that the functional programs neither improved the well-being of the learners nor responded to their perceived needs. Work-place literacy programs, even those in developed economies, need to heed the results of these prior experiments in divorcing literacy from social and personal context (Limage, L., former UNESCO program manager, Paris, direct communication, October 28 1996).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the extensive and expensive involvement of international agencies in 'functional' literacy campaigns is that the effects of enhanced literacy education tend to be undermined when the 'functional' literacy capabilities need to be transferred into different contexts. What is critical to the transfer of acquired literacy capabilities is the precise kind of literacy that is afforded by a given educational program. This question is addressed in the following section.

2.4.1 Teaching of literacy

This section outlines, in a general way, some of the important ideas about the nature and effects of literacy that have been widespread in educational circles and that have therefore influenced much educational practice in Australia. It is not the intention of the document to provide a detailed or critical analysis of these schools of thought, but it is important to provide a summary of the theories and research on which each approach is based.

Initially some general background is given to the differences of opinion and practices evident among teachers, researchers and policy makers in the area of literacy education. Later sections focus the discussion on problems and opportunities facing educators at the three school-age levels and the post-compulsory and adult sectors that must be addressed in comprehensive literacy planning.

From this it follows that it is necessary to explore the collective knowledge and beliefs of literacy educators in order to develop some understanding of the relevance of each approach to the literacy demands that our current context poses. In this and following sections, we draw on the research and development work done by Australian literacy educators as documented in a number of recent research and development projects in the area of literacy education (especially, Breen, Louden, Barratt-Pugh, Rivilland, Rohl, Rhydwen, Lloyd, and Carr 1994; Christie 1990; Christie *et al* 1991; Freebody, Ludwig and Gunn 1995; Wickert 1989; Freebody, Cumming, Falk and Muspratt 1993; Hammond, Wickert, Burns and Joyce 1993; Davison 1987; McKay and Scarino 1991, Comber 1994).

We also consider a number of recent inquiries into the state of literacy education (ALLC 1995; House of Representatives 1992).

These research papers and reports have been valuable in providing the analysis for the following summary.

Many contemporary theories of literacy stress the 'site-specificity' of

literacy practices, and seriously question the idea that literacy is a single attribute or a single, specifiable set of criterial skills (Street 1994). Literacy practices that are developed in schooling contexts, therefore, amount necessarily to selections from available literacy practices. Furthermore, these selections are not accidental, but rather support the organisational needs of schooling. The question then becomes the extent to which the school-based capabilities that ensue are productive reflections of what Australians require as citizens and workers.

Teachers, curriculum writers, policy-makers and researchers have developed a range of categories for discussing ways of teaching literacy to young children. These approaches are not always in opposition nor are they categorically distinct. Some of the more prominent of these categories of pedagogy include:

- *literature-based learning*: In this approach the role of literature in literacy acquisition is emphasised. Its components are a rich engagement with good writing and personal engagement in text. Its effects are taken to be in motivating the development of capabilities, the learning and recall of story patterns and a close relationship between teacher and students. In these ways, literature is used to build a community of readers with strong motivation to read and write;

- *natural learning*: In this procedure, sometimes called holistic learning, there is an emphasis on the personal construction of meaning with skills being acquired, mostly naturalistically, within whole texts. This is a literacy gained in meaningful contexts rather than through explicit instruction and practice. There is often an effort to mirror the 'naturalness' of what is believed to pertain in children learning to speak and consequently immersion in literacy materials, along with self-monitoring by students, are favoured. Many adherents to natural learning do believe in 'modelling' what is to be learned and even in explicit teaching, but always in meaningful contexts. In its idealised position natural learning is conceived as building on the

oral language proficiency and early literacy (emergent literacy) experiences that children are seen to have acquired before school;

- *experience-based learning*: The provision and recall of 'real world' experiences in and out of the classroom are seen as the basis for genuine motivation for learning and for developing the necessary mental scaffolding that facilitates learning. Topic learning drives literacy learning which is most beneficial when it is directly tied to first-hand experiences;

- *skills-based learning*: The emphasis here is on an analytic approach, breaking up the holism of reading and writing activities as they are experienced into certain teachable elements. These elements are conceived partly in terms of the components of the language system - letter-sounds, letter-clusters, syllables and so on. However, some forms of text approaches to skills-based learning emphasise explicit knowledge of clause/sentence grammar, conventionalised components of different types of texts, and sequences of information in texts;

- *genre-based learning*: Proponents of genre-based learning deal with components and sequences of information in text. Genre approaches address the relationship between the social functions of particular texts (text-types), their structure, and the patterns of vocabulary and functional grammar that make the particular text effective for its social purpose;

- *critical literacy approaches*: These approaches emphasise the fact that being an effective reader and writer involves understanding and using the points of view expressed (and those silenced) in a text, and thinking critically about how the reader is led to accept or reject the assumptions in texts that support the positions of certain groups (related to gender, race, ideology, social class, religion, etc); and

- *cultural-practice based approaches*: This approach draws on the

language and cultural patterns of the immediate surrounding community to develop texts and embed students' capabilities in the social routines as well as the appropriate language of the community.

Many literacy educators adopt 'eclectic' mixtures drawing on aspects of these approaches in their provision of literacy education for students in schools and in pre-service teacher education programs (Cairney 1995; Badger *et al* 1993; Christie *et al* 1991, Comber and Cormack 1995). It is crucially important for preservice teacher education and for on-going professional development to provide teachers with a pedagogical framework so that they can incorporate ideas from different theoretical perspectives in a principled manner.

2.4.1.1 Families of thought

It is helpful to analyse studies of literacy teachers' beliefs about the specifics of literacy's nature, purposes and effects. Studies of the teaching practices and preferences of literacy educators is also available for examination. These can be examined to identify the clusters which emerge and which are termed here: *families of thought.* This approach was adopted by the *Project of National Significance; Teaching English Literacy*(Christie *et al* 1991; following earlier work by Gilbert 1989) in its national survey of the views and practices of teacher educators working in the areas of English and literacy pre-service education. The families of thought are summarised as follows:

- *skills* approaches which emphasise the perceptual and technical procedures of decoding (for reading) and encoding (for writing);

- *growth and heritage* approaches which emphasise the private, personal, and individual ways in which people use reading and writing, and grow through reading and writing, and the significance of reading and writing as offering access to the valued literary heritage of a culture;

- *critical-cultural* approaches which emphasise the variability of

everyday literacy practices from culture to culture and setting to setting, and the importance to everyday social experience of critically analysing literate communications for their underlying belief systems and their cultural consequences.

There are fundamental differences among these approaches in the definition of literacy, whether explicitly stated or implied. These differences concern what reading and writing basically *are*, not just about what they could or should be. These *families of thought* also differ with regard to the ways of knowing about social and educational practice. Further, these families of thought call on different kinds of support from either formal experimental or observational research, derive from or refer to different research disciplines and also differ in how the everyday experiences of educational practitioners are utilised and understood.

Psychological descriptions of human capabilities have strongly influenced the growth of literacy education. These descriptions emphasise mental processes to do with practice, perceptual accuracy and fluency, and they have become associated with direct, practice-based teaching strategies. Recently, this view has become associated with the idea of competencies, discrete, readily 'testable' aspects of literacy performance that some teachers and education and training systems have used as the bases for curriculum development.

Skills approaches have drawn heavily on psychological descriptions of human functioning, and have pointed to the need for beginning literacy learners to acquire, systematically and explicitly, the fundamental coding conventions of the written script (Byrne and Fielding-Barnsley 1989; Nicholson and Hill 1985). A related position extends the notion of explicit teaching to the complex psychological processes needed for successful reading and writing. Advocates of this position (Watson and Sinclair 1987) point to the relationship between literacy development and the increasing refinement and ramification of psychological processes, and for the importance of modelling these processes in teaching. Clay (1991) approach-

es literacy from developmental and cognitive psychology rather than a more behavioural paradigm.

Growth and Heritage approaches, on the other hand, have drawn on 'progressivist' ideas about childhood, schooling, and literacy which have been prominent in many countries over the last three decades. Advocates of this position (Cambourne 1992; Holdaway 1979) have stressed the need to provide 'natural', activity-based learning conditions similar to those believed to influence the early acquisition of speech. From the early 1970s until the mid- to late-1980s, the ideas underlying *Growth and Heritage* approaches were the mainstays of many teacher education programs and curricula generated by various education systems. *Skills* and *Critical/Cultural* approaches have to some extent arisen and gained currency precisely because of their criticisms of *Growth and Heritage* approaches. In particular these criticisms call for much more explicit teaching of literacy in various knowledge domains. Proponents of *Skills* and *Critical/Cultural* approaches often focus on the difficulties which face disadvantaged students; students who do not evidently meet the psychological, linguistic, social, or cultural expectations of established curricula and the organisation of regular schooling. Explicit teaching in the foundations of literacy has been extended from *code-cracking* at the word and letter level to whole texts in a functional-linguistic approach to reading and writing texts (Christie 1990; Martin 1985). This text-linguistic approach has led to curriculum and professional development programs that come under the heading of *Genre*, as exemplified by a section of the *Project of National Significance; Teaching English Literacy* (Christie *et al* 1991).

Finally, drawing on educational sociology, literacy educators have developed critical accounts of the contents of texts and their relevance to the ideological conditions in which they are produced and learned about in schools (Lankshear and Lawler 1987; Luke and Gilbert 1993). These approaches hold that much of what is learnt about public life, its organisation and the competing interests of various groups within society, is learned through literacy. It follows from this that from the beginning of their enculturation into reading and writing practices students need to understand increasingly systematic

ways of critically analysing the often silent cultural assumptions on which texts are based. To the extent that these understandings are not explicitly addressed across school systems, the forms of citizenship made available through literacy education are not equally or randomly distributed by schools.

Each of these positions, with varying degrees of emphasis, has been actively promoted in Australia over recent decades, and each provides a distinctive view of the 'problem' of literacy and of its genesis while some address on-going learning in which acquired literacy is refined and honed further in particular domains. Each, furthermore, constitutes a theory about appropriate intervention to solve literacy problems. Consequently, there is persistent pressure on educators to adapt their practices for different learner groups, including the particular needs of second language learners, and to changing departmental positions and community expectations. As a result literacy teaching rarely amounts to pure forms of any of the three approaches, nor could it since the different perspectives focus on or emphasise different aspects of reading and writing processes or of the social and cultural practice of literacy.

Typically, teachers and teacher-educators hold combinations of ideas, with many explicitly characterising themselves as 'eclectic' or 'pragmatic' in their approach. This combination of perspectives is not unpredictable given the rapidly changing circumstances of literacy education in Australia in the last thirty years, the more heterogenous learner population that has become typical during the past three decades, and the visibility, hostility and complexity of the debates among the differing approaches. It is of course the case that these *families of thought* are not rigidly bounded, there are internal variations within family resemblances, and many literacy educators hold and apply combinations of ideas from the different families (Badger, Comber and Weeks 1993; Christie *et al* 1991).

A challenge to these families of thought comes in the Australian initiated New London Group with its radical reconceptualisation of literacy pedagogy via the

Multiliteracies project. Basing its construct on the pervasive pluralism of contemporary society these ten Australian, US and British researchers and teachers have devised a pedagogy challenge based on three interlocking changing realities:

Domain	*Changing reality*	*Designing social futures*
Working lives	Fast capitalism/postFordism	Productive diversity
Public lives	Decline of Public Pluralism	Civic Pluralism
Private lives	Invasion of Private Space	Multilayered lifeworlds

A dynamic approach to meaning making is offered for schools in which learners are seen to have existing or already-learned designs for meaning which derive from family and cultural circumstances (which integrate visual, spatial, gestural and other modes of communication with traditional linguistic ones) which are applied in communicative processes known as designing. These designs become confirmed or rejected when successful communication occurs and so become newly available in changed form as a modification or elaboration of the original design.

Literate societies expect their citizens to function in each of the language domains centrally addressed by the *skills, growth and heritage* or *critical-cultural* families of thought. These domains are a necessary component of a curriculum and teaching program. Most debates in the field have consisted of the misleading claim that instructional attention to one domain of capability is *sufficient* for a literacy learning program.

Proponents of a particular *family of thought* have argued that attention to one or another of the necessary domains of knowledge addressed by it will ensure that the other domains 'automatically' will follow. It is sometimes assumed or stated that this will occur through implicit, indirect or incidental learning. In the light of the increasingly diverse textual *codes, modes* and *meanings* facing Australians in their literacy activities, a reliance on indirect learning of the significant domains of literacy capability is no longer acceptable or responsible.

2.4.1.2 Sufficient necessity

It follows that there is a need to define the specifications for teaching and the curriculum that will form the sufficient conditions for formal apprenticeship into a literate society. An acceptance of the necessary status of the domains (breaking the code, participating in the meanings of texts, using texts functionally and analysing them critically) for becoming literate leads to two significant questions about the comprehensiveness of current literacy curricula and teaching practices:

- Does any one of these domains come naturally or easily such that its learning can be left entirely to incidental, indirect or implicit processes?

- Does learning about these domains have some natural or inevitable developmental progression such that some domains can be left exclusively to instruction in later school years?

Current research and professional knowledge suggests that the answer to both questions is likely to be 'no', and that curriculum planners and teachers should therefore also devote instructional space to the explicit treatment of these domains at all levels of education adapted as required to meet the needs of different learner groups (e.g. indigenous Australians, other children from non-English speaking backgrounds, the hearing impaired, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds) from preschool to post-compulsory education and training.

The need for explicit teaching in each of these domains means for effective literacy teaching there cannot be an 'anything goes' position. This comprehensive view of the capabilities required to take a full part in a literate society is able to incorporate the expanded view of the nature and significance of literacy in the new cultural and economic conditions facing Australians. The issues raised are further elaborated in later sections of this document, as the early years, the middle years and later school years and the post-compulsory school sector are considered under separate headings.

2.4.1.3 The nature and importance of literacy

At this juncture some general conclusions about literacy's power and about the dimensions of literacy and its importance are warranted:

a) Literacy as coding and decoding

Literacy requires the coding of information in and out of written symbolic form: i.e. the de-coding and encoding of information in reading and writing. It also concerns resources for understanding the ways meanings are built in written and other texts, the varying functions of texts and analysing critically the cultural dimensions of texts.

b) Literacy as multi-modal

Literacy also refers to multiple ways in which meaning is built into a text. In this sense literacy is a complex communication system that involves changing practices and conventions in which written language interacts with the spoken, gestural, visual and other imagery, such that different areas of understanding are interwoven in creative and complex ways.

c) Literacy as plural

Like all communication, literacy is a plural activity, hence the increasing use of the term *literacies*, since literacy necessarily reflects the diversity of social, technological, cultural, linguistic and economic contexts of which it forms a part.

d) How readers and writers 'operate'

Readers and writers operate simultaneously at three levels. At the first level, *skilled practitioners* of the written forms of a language order intentions and retrieve them from the grapho-numeric symbols

that cultures have created for their languages. A second level calls on *psychological* processes in which readers and writers interact with written text as individuals, especially during their development as learners. Finally, as part of *literate communities*, reading and writing operates within sociological domains in which diverse languages, social contexts and attitudes reshape what has been learned about literacy to produce a complex interaction of text-types, cultural evaluations of literacy and validated public and private uses of its various forms.

e) Societal functions of literacy

Society's functions are conducted, to different degrees, with and by written texts. These functions build on and create personal, social and work relationships, positioning readers and writers in particular relationships.

f) Texts as cultural products

Written texts are also cultural products and, as such, reflect the particular constellation of social, moral and political arrangements operating at any time and place, including disciplinary knowledge, common-sense understandings of the world and the purposes or intentions of individual writers and readers.

g) Literacy and identities

The identities - personal, national, economic, ethnic, political, and ideological - of citizens of literate nations are called upon and acted out through written texts, especially since one social function of writing and reading concerns the regulation and control of public knowledge, be it about health, law, trades, public safety, the economies of communities and the nation, or national culture.

h) Active literacy and public participation

In actively democratic societies such as Australia's, literacy is involved in processes of debate, contest and dissent as well as of consensus, collaboration and cooperation.

i) Literacy for international communication

In the rapidly globalising context of the latter part of the twentieth century literacy for Australians needs to also impart the kind of English that facilitates international communication, as well as in languages other than English to deepen and enrich such communication.

In the light of the important general characteristics of literacy provided above and the new cultural, economic and technological conditions that our current educational efforts confront, the discussion now turns to the role of schools and other educational institutions and authorities in meeting the literacy demands of the future.

2.5 Teaching cycles

It is acknowledged that education and training systems have definitive jurisdiction over the development of curriculum and the advocacy of particular teaching methods. In many systems this is the province of individual schools within frameworks set by school councils or other bodies. It is also the case that the process for formulating National Statements and Profiles for the Key Learning Areas has contributed to a much greater awareness among educators about the commonalities and differences across Australian education.

It is important to note that, regardless of curriculum requirements and guidelines for teaching, the efficacy of literacy education provision depends on the actual teaching methods which provide the opportunities for learning in classrooms, homes and workplaces. It is important, therefore, to examine

current thinking on some of the specifications for adequate literacy teaching that arise from recent research, curriculum and professional development projects.

From within each of the *families of thought* about literacy learning, consideration has been give to the notion of a teaching cycle, at its simplest, a set of instructional phases that involve explication of the features of literacy that are to be learned, opportunities to practise and extend these features to new texts, audiences/purposes and topics, and a summary phase in which the new learning is reviewed and monitored. This cycle is endorsed, in a general sense, by advocates of *skills* approaches (Adams 1990; Andrews 1989, 1992), *growth and heritage* approaches (Boomer 1982; Holdaway 1979) and *critical/cultural* approaches (Derewianka 1991; Christie *et al* 1991). The International Multiliteracies Project proposes a teaching cycle which is broadly compatible, comprising situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice (New London Group 1996).

From these recent developments, a number of specifications of what counts as a blueprint for explicit teaching can be elaborated, again regardless of the specific teaching method preferred by school systems and individual teachers towards achieving an effective literacy teaching and learning cycle. The wider environment ought always to be one where learners are engaged in purposeful literacy events and activities.

- The clear presentation of new literacy learning, its use, value and practice.

- Clear pointers to the elements and understandings that make up and that will lead to accomplishing this new learning.

- The provision of examples and modelling of these elements and understandings, in meaningful and worthwhile contexts, that leads to the development of this new accomplishment.

- A series of meaningful tasks that apply the new literacy learning and

lead to its development through practice in different settings.

- The monitoring of progress toward accomplishment by learners and by teachers.

- The correction of errors and modifications of approximations and appropriate feedback on these.

- The collective confirmation of successful accomplishment, and connections to previous and later elements to be learned.

- Opportunities to repeat the whole or part of the cycle again (adapted from Freiberg and Freebody 1995).

Teaching has many layers of activity and involves a complex set of events. In a successful teaching program, many interrelated and non-related explicit cycles will be taking place at one time, as well as meaningful and rich language/literacy immersion experiences. The specification of the elements of a cycle such as this does not lead to the advocacy of one teaching method over others, but rather is an attempt to answer the question of what might constitute the minimal structural expectations for the formal organisation of literacy learning. As with the discussion in previous sections on literacy, it is not denied that important incidental and indirect learning will take place in and out of formal learning sessions. What is emphasised here, however, is that students need to know explicitly about how classroom learning is organised so that they can take part in lessons actively and thus maximise their formal and informal learning opportunities. When skills are the explicit goal of the teaching meaningful contexts are still relevant, skills focussed on within whole texts and practised but for purposes the learner can identify.

Part III: Australia's learners

3.1 Australian English speakers

English is the medium of the bulk of literacy education in Australia and most learners of literacy come to schooling as mono-lingual English speakers. For many literacy is synonymous with English.

Any policy for literacy ought to be clear about aiming to promote competence in the use of Australian English in particular. Axiomatic in this are the four broad language competencies: the ability to communicate freely in speaking and writing as well as full comprehension as readers and listeners. In developing such competence both school students and adults are supported by the use of Australian English in the wider community, in the media and in the general education system. This has the effect, subtle but powerful, of validating the use of Australian English as the target variety of English in literacy programs. It is also a critical stimulus to the promotion of Australian English for non-English speakers. Being able to speak and write like a 'local' and decode local idiom is a vital part of participation in the wider speech community. Regionally, Australian English is very homogenous across the country, though there are clear patterns of regional variation in the vocabulary. These are sufficiently marked to cause some confusion among learners of English (Bryant 1985: 55).

The emphasis on Australian English needs to be complemented, however, by the awareness that in communicating outside Australia, the local features may sometimes be a distraction. *Australian* is one of the smaller varieties of English in the world. A sophisticated literacy competence is called for in adapting one's variety of English in an international direction. There is therefore strategic reason for making connections with international English in the process of teaching the more advanced literacy skills, especially in writing. Fully literate students and citizens would thus be sensitised to the frontiers of Australian and international English, and be able to operate across them.

However, the national literacy endeavour takes as given the typically mixed levels of language performance in any literacy classroom. This variability relates to multiple factors of individual maturity, gender, as well as background educational experience.

Recent research into the writing performance of New South Wales high school students showed that both gender and type of school (city or country) had some bearing on the reliability of students' writing as measured by the typical expectations of schooling and public use of the language (Style Council 1994-6). The same variability applies to reading and, possibly, to the less frequently assessed skills of listening and speaking. There is a dearth of research on the latter though adult speech and conversation data do indicate that spoken language output is highly variable in any context due to the influence of personal and institutional factors.

The lack of comparative information for students makes it more difficult to assess their speech competence appropriately. This is crucially important since spoken language competence and students' resources in speech underpin developing competence in the written mode of language, through managing larger units of discourse and in communicating arguments. Complementary development of speech and writing is thus part of the strategy for helping individuals at their point of entry into formal education and for advancing literacy achievements across the board.

3.1.1 English as a world language

English has evolved into a pluricentric language, a language with different but mutually intelligible centres each propagating national norms of correct usage (*e.g.*, South African, Indian, Philipino, Australian, Singaporean, Nigerian).

English is becoming the principal *lingua franca* of the modern world; the *lingua mundi* (Jernudd 1992: 512). Accompanying its growth is the emergence of new 'ethnic' and national varieties of English; hybrids from its remarkable global expansion. These varieties are intergenerationally stable expansions of the older native 'Englishes' (British and American) and carry new and local attachments beyond the instrumental and communicative advantages that international English offers.

These 'new native' Englishes add an expanding circle of English users to the inner-circle of original English users (Kachru 1986; 1992). There are now two international scholarly journals, *World Englishes* and *English Today*, exclusively devoted to the analysis of English in its plural forms. There is, therefore, a multiculturalism *within* English, traditionally a combination of its originating sources within Europe and its diversity within the British Isles, but now vastly expanded by 'new native' varieties, and the older established American, Australian, New Zealand, South African and Canadian native varieties.

These national, social and even 'racial' variants of English are universally established, with such 'Englishes' reflecting the distinctive semantic and pragmatic features of the first languages and cultures of their users. Australia is richly endowed with such human linguistic resources among its population and one of the distinctive features of pluralism in public policy in this country has been to explore the interconnection between the characteristic diversity of the population and Australia's national interests.

In many Australian workplaces a dynamic, intercultural English is the lingua franca that speakers of different first languages use with each other.

They bring to it pragmatic and communication norms from their first languages. The cultural expectations of communication in English often do not coincide for all its users. As the lingua franca among Australians who speak other languages dynamic forms of English are produced in Australia's workplaces and other settings where intercultural communication occurs. Native speakers are often in the minority in such communication situations and would benefit by learning how different cultural groups communicate in English Clyne (1994:209).

Both within Australia and internationally English is therefore an interconnected matrix of spoken and written forms. It is important for intercultural communication within Australia and international intelligibility that learners gain an awareness of the variety within English and a knowledge of how to communicate with speakers of different English varieties. At the same time it is important that through public education all Australians are able to add to their repertoire of English the public and prestige forms of English through which citizenship participation, economic and cultural opportunity are enhanced.

3.2 Language diversity and English literacy

3.2.1 English as a second language, standard English as a second dialect

Often, and for some groups especially, spoken language has 'literate' characteristics, and written language draws heavily on general linguistic and social resources. All too frequently consideration of the early, middle and later years of schooling and the appropriate pedagogy for literacy presupposes that the learners are proficient speakers of English.

This is a problematic assumption in contemporary Australian education. The five presumed language learning years that much literacy education takes for granted is, in fact, for fifteen percent of all children in Australia, twenty percent in Victoria and almost twenty-five percent in the Northern Territory, in a language other than English, including Australian languages

(Kipp, Clyne and Pauwels 1994: 25). For an unknown number it is in a stable dialect of English different from the one the speaker will encounter in school.

The deaf constitute a community with a distinctive culture and language. Among these are Auslan or Australian Sign Language, and other sign languages and communication systems. The intellectual development of such children requires bilingual and bicultural approaches so that English literacy is acquired in addition to, and not by replacing, the rich communicative system Australian deaf communities have generated.

Communicative interaction with adults results in the internalisation by children, by the age of five, on entering school, of the productive use of many features of the phonological, morphological, sign, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic rules of the mother tongue. This remarkable learning is a resource available to schooling in Australia to cultivate and value. Literacy education in the early years is invariably conceptualised (whichever *family of thought* the literacy program is based on) on the *given* of full control of spoken English by the child.

However, for ESL learners and for other language minorities, for whom a fully developed communicative medium can be equally justifiably assumed, this given is not at all given. Compounding this problem is the fact that a large minority of non-English speaking students commence schooling in Australia at ages older than five. Many have had interrupted schooling experiences and a 'diffuse' or insecure literacy in their mother tongue. For these students, literacy development needs are enduring and occur in both their first and their second languages for many years.

The last national comprehensive evaluations of ESL education in Australia are more than a decade old (Campbell and McMeniman 1985; Campbell *et al* 1984) but it is unlikely that the finding made there that the bulk of educational provision within Commonwealth and State ESL funding is for 'first phase' learners; those with minimal oral language proficiency, has changed dramatically. Since these reviews there has been growing evidence

that ESL provision has lost ground, tempting one researcher to comment: " ... the nation's strategic response to the educational needs of its children from immigrant families is in significant trouble" (Cahill 1996: 89).

Many students experience 'second or third phase' English difficulties, in the middle and later years of their schooling. These difficulties are principally with decontextualised English, typically literacy activities, which are more common in the upper years. The by-then improved oral proficiency of these students may often mask their on-going need for ESL assistance. This 'disguised' English need warrants renewed examination after more than a decade since the Campbell reviews of the major administrative and language policy changes that have taken place. In her discussion of the difficulties which face ESL learners of English literacy, Wales (1990) identifies the following areas for intervention:

Reading: learning about the concept of print for those who are illiterate in the first language so that sound-symbol correspondences can be appreciated; gaining a symmetrical 'world knowledge' for children whose word meanings in the first language are culturally constrained; language-specific rhetorical organisation and syntax; hearing the written word, i.e., emulating the experience of English speaking children in listening to stories; and various language-oriented activities.

Writing: broadly the same *families of thought* which characterise literacy educational practices are encountered within ESL and are inflected for the particular needs of ESL learners although *growth and heritage* models may have less sway since ESL teachers are acutely aware of the *code* needs of the ESL student, consequently ESL practice tends to be more focussed on teaching written *genres* and language structure; there is also a strong advocacy of both intensive language focussed teaching combined with a language across the curriculum approach; textbook language teaching features prominently among ESL teachers who are usually aware that the technical discourse of post-primary subject areas is often forbiddingly excluding of ESL learners.

On the other hand it has often been observed that ESL background students gravitate to subject choices in which the language load of the subject is relatively less. Hence science and mathematics programs rather than literature or subject English are often selected in the upper years.

Specific areas of skills which Australian students from language backgrounds other than English develop and need to develop as they become more proficient in English in the school learning context have been fully documented in Australian research, curriculum development and proficiency assessment activities in recent years. The NLLIA ESL Bandscales (McKay *et al* 1993) and the ESL Scales (AECa 1994) provide detailed guidance to policy makers and teachers about intervention to support ESL learners. The intensity and type of ESL support which is required will alter in response to many variables including the educational background of the learner and the level of literate proficiency the ESL learner has in his/her first language.

Three general characterisations are possible however:

- direct ESL teaching in which English itself is the focus of learning. Direct ESL teaching may occur in intensive centres specially devoted to ESL, or as parallel English (English as subject) where ESL specialists teach ESL on the English line or as withdrawal programs where ESL follows an ESL program which is a discrete program not integrated with any subject in the regular curriculum;

- cooperative teaching which will involve various forms of joint teaching between content area teachers and ESL specialists, including integrated withdrawal in which ESL specialists offer a program linked with a regular subject but in a withdrawal setting, team teaching between subject area teachers and ESL specialists in the one class, and parallel teaching where the ESL specialist imparts the regular program along with ESL support but to a separated learning group;

- ESL-informed regular teaching, in various forms in which across-the-

> curriculum guidance, support and assistance is employed to ensure the special needs of ESL learners are attended to in the course of the delivery of an otherwise unaltered curriculum (McKay and Scarino 1991: 11).

For maximum effectiveness such approaches require whole-school commitment and support and to be bolstered by reinforcing policy statements at the level of educational jurisdiction. Extended and extensive ESL is called for rather than the subsuming of the English language needs of such children under the generic category of 'literacy'.

3.2.2 Bilingual literacy

The prevailing view about the effect of mother tongue maintenance on the acquisition of a second language has undergone radical revision in the last few decades. It is now very widely agreed, having been demonstrated and continually replicated in extensive international and Australian studies, that bilingualism is cognitively enriching, and that bilingual children outperform their monolingual peers, matched for socio-economic status and various measures of cognitive and intellectual ability (Liddicoat 1991).

Early twentieth century studies of the effect of bilingualism on cognitive performance were guilty of not tightly controlling for level of proficiency in the two languages and accordingly confounded important variables. More rigorous examination of the link between language and cognition in bilingualism, since pioneering work in Canada in the early 1960s, is virtually unanimous on the strong advantages that bilinguals exhibit over monolinguals in a large number of measures (Döpke, McNamara and Quinn 1991; Saunders 1991; Rado 1991).

A strong theoretical explanation that is widely accepted for this phenomenon is the 'linguistic interdependence hypothesis' (Cummins 1981). This posits that the abilities that underlie the use and interpretation of 'decontextualised' language, are common to both the languages of a bilingual. Invariably examples of such decontextualisation are drawn from literacy

activities. Concepts and capabilities are not stored in the brain in a separate systems specific to the language in which they were initially acquired. Rather they underlie the language in which they were either acquired or through which they are ultimately realised and so sustain any number of languages. It is however true that learners seem to have to reach a 'threshold' competence in the mother tongue, and the conceptual sophistication this implies, to fully benefit from instruction in the second language. The crosslingual nature of such skills means that information gained in one language is, in most cases, transferred linguistically to the other languages of the bilingual learner.

It is of some concern then that bilingual ability is sometimes considered a deficit, a problem, or a handicap when it is in fact, invariably and impressively, a positive advantage, an intellectual and cultural resource. Indeed although it is certain that such bilingual intellectual benefits mostly accrue from high levels of competence of two languages, recent Australian research has identified some benefits that English speakers gain in their early literacy as they study a second language (Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri 1993). English speaking children in Melbourne primary schools studying Italian in limited duration programs were shown to have improved English word attack and word recognition skills after only one year's encounter with Italian. Far from impeding the acquisition of literacy in English it is clear that engagement with a second or additional language may provide learners with concrete cognitive and metalinguistic benefits. More research is needed however to explore whether such benefits apply when children are gaining literacy skills simultaneously in less closely related languages.

The evidence for commencing with an oral approach, or delaying the commencement of a second language to the middle years of a primary school program is mixed and ambivalent (Clyne, Jenkins, Chen, Tsokalidou and Wallner 1995). More extensive research involving a wider range of languages and teaching methods is warranted. Bilingual children are at least as creative in their reconstruction of the language input of their home environments as are monolingual children. They deal effectively with the richer, more diverse

environment of mixed language and mixed script writing systems which they encounter (Baghban 1984; Janssen and Pauwels 1993).

The education of language minority children can involve any of the following 'ideal types' or some combination of these programs and objectives for programs:

- *sink or swim*: an approach characterised by neglect of the distinctive language learning needs of children from language backgrounds other than English. Some forms of what are called 'structured immersion' are essentially sink or swim since they share the fundamental view that ESL learners will acquire the academic and cognitive language required for participation in classroom activities incidentally, or by planned participation in classroom activities, but without any deliberate attention being paid to their distinctive English language needs, or their existing capacities in another language; submerging spoken English language needs under the generic heading of literacy would in effect result in a subtle but unmistakable sink or swim approach;

- *English as a second language*: ESL methodologies vary significantly along two extreme points of a continuum, at one level full withdrawal from regular classroom activities for intensive second language instruction, utilising a variety of methodologies, to full immersion in classrooms, but with language across the curriculum attention to the growing English learning needs of children so that all teachers attend to the English discourse dimensions of the particular subject matter being taught. ESL can accompany mother tongue maintenance programs of several types from teaching the spoken language as though it were a foreign language to any number of bilingual approaches. Regrettably ESL support is often provided for beginning learners only whereas such support is warranted at key education transition points as well (e.g. primary to secondary transition and middle to senior secondary school) where students acquiring English as a second

language are prone to fall back in their English development;

- *transitional bilingualism*: In programs with a transitional aim the first language is used for a strictly limited period to facilitate the acquisition by the learner of subject matter, transferring the full curriculum to English-only once a sufficient level of competence of English has been attained;

- *mono-literate bilingualism*: In programs with this kind of aim, whether explicit or implied, the learner is offered a program in which both languages are used as media of instruction but only one, the second or target language, typically English, is used to introduce literacy skills;

- *partial biliterate bilingualism*: This term describes programs in which both languages are used for all four macro-skills of language (reading, writing, listening and speaking), but in which academic subjects are divided so that the first language is reserved for 'cultural subjects' pertaining to the home-first language (arts, folklore, geography are typical examples), while the second language, English in Australia's case, is used exclusively for 'core curricula' subjects and technical domains of learning;

- *total biliterate bilingualism*: As the name implies, programs of this nature aim to achieve bilingualism by teaching in and through both languages across all areas of the curriculum and in all domains, usually operating a separation between them according to time allocations of various sorts (Hamers and Blanc 1989).

These program descriptions relate more closely to the needs of children who are acquiring English in Australian schools, whether these children are speakers of Australian indigenous languages or of immigrant-derived community languages. However, with appropriate adaptation, they also describe some 'ideal types' for deaf children many of whom have been denied

the possibility of developing an intellectualised level of proficiency in a first language, Auslan, prior to commencing to learn English literacy.

For children of English mother tongue such programs are also potentially beneficial but are more likely to be referred to as second language immersion than bilingual education. Nevertheless the same cognitive, social and academic benefits which accrue to language minority children whose literate functioning is developed in two languages, is potentially available to English background children if they are able to achieve high levels of proficiency in the two languages at an early age.

In many Aboriginal languages for which writing systems acceptable to the community of users of the language have been devised similar issues arise. However it is often the case that literature production is an essential additional requirement of these languages. This is a necessary correlate of ensuring that children's initial literacy can be secured in the spoken language so that its connection to meaningful daily use can be perceived by the learner.

It must be an express goal of literacy planning to ensure that the distinctive needs of ESL and 'public' English as a second dialect for immigrant and for indigenous children are adequately addressed in their own right and that the distinctive needs of deaf children in their acquisition of English literacy appropriately builds on their unique communications systems so that their cultural and linguistic repertoire is expanded.

3.2.2.1 Early bilingual literacy and non-roman script languages

Much of the research that has established that literacy skills gained in one language transfer to use in another language has been conducted with languages that use roman script, say Spanish and English. Orthographies for languages vary greatly however, and utilise different conceptual bases for rendering spoken language into written form (Coulmas 1989). The smallest of these differences are those within the various standardised forms of

English, the spelling differences between, say, American and Australian Englishes.

Script differences may range from minor variations to romanised writing, such as the use of markers or different letters in German or Swedish, Spanish or Czech, to more substantial use of diacritics to mark intonational and other variation as in Vietnamese, to systems which are different from roman but still alphabetic (such as Cyrillic or Greek), to ideographs as used in Chinese or mixed syllabic and ideogram systems such as with Japanese. There are still other differences as well.

Two main questions arise. The first is whether children with emergent literacy in a non-roman script language, and with a growing awareness of the conventions and practices of such literacy (*e.g.* for routinised reading of the Koran with respectful deference) and with skilled knowledge of its conventions can readily transfer these skills to the appropriate equivalent conventions of English. The second question is whether skills from English literacy can readily transfer to these languages.

Further it is of considerable importance to examine the relationship between such systems as they evolve and the patterns of acquisition in English. Further questions relate to the complex literacy practices of some communities, in which children may well acquire more than one script in home and religious settings while they acquire English (Saxena 1994). The transfer of literacy skills between languages with radically different scripts is less clear than that between languages with similar scripts and further research is needed to examine the extent of the transfer and the processes the transfer employs. Nevertheless, recent Australian and Canadian research in progress offers encouragement that productive literate relationships will be uncovered. In well designed programs late immersion programs at junior secondary school level show promising early findings of positive effects on academic functioning, including familiarity with three scripts (Lorch, McNamara and Eisikovits 1992).

A program of research on the literacy resources within the Australian community ought to be initiated so that advice to schools and teachers may be soundly based.

3.3 Indigenous Australians

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are multilingual with a wide range of sophisticated discourses and genres in community languages as well as in distinctively Aboriginal forms of English. The forms of English spoken as a first language within Aboriginal communities differ greatly.

These various language influences have an important bearing on the language repertoire which students bring into the school literacy context, which needs to be recognised in curriculum development, programs of teacher preparation and school language policies. The grammatical structures, semantic fields and characteristics of community languages will inevitably have a considerable influence on the way in which teenagers and other community members speak and write English, as will the varieties of Aboriginal English in use.

Aboriginal English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages structure meanings differently from the language linguists call SAE, standard Australian English, revealing semantic values closer to the source Aboriginal languages than to English. There are important regional variations however: for example, in the Northern Territory it appears that Aboriginal English is a marker of identity, and teenagers do not tend to identify with non-Aboriginal Australians speaking SAE, whereas in Western Australia, SAE appears to have higher status. Consequently, teachers need awareness of the total social and linguistic ecology of community life which greatly influences the nature of the resources and the attitudes which students bring to the formal learning of English, and the way they respond to the classroom teaching they are offered (Clayton, Barnett, Kemelfield and Mühlhäusler 1996, Wilson 1996)

The most important difference between Aboriginal English varieties and school English is that the former is a purely spoken language, the patterns of which are influenced by spoken Aboriginal languages, while the latter is both spoken and written, and its spoken mode is influenced by the written mode that has evolved. This is the key difference between the model of English to which the children are habitually exposed in the community and home, and the model of English in the classroom.

Aboriginal English tends to share, to some extent, patterns of wording and rhythm borrowed from the Aboriginal languages that are their speakers' mother tongues.

For effective literacy teaching for indigenous children, including urban children, there must be a clear understanding of the social and communicative functions of Aboriginal Englishes and pidgins, and their lexical and grammatical structures, in order that teachers understand that these language forms are a foundation on which to build in bridging to SAE rather than a source of interference into the learner's use of school English. Acknowledging the value of multilingualism and the many English dialects known by the children of Aboriginal communities, including a recognition of Aboriginal English and Kriols as languages in their own right, is a necessary part of such an approach.

English language development and literacy teaching also need to support intercultural understandings and indigenous multilingual identity.

In isolated Aboriginal communities classrooms are multilingual and multidialectal. While the language of instruction is SAE simultaneously the languages of classroom participation are Aboriginal English and community languages. The use of Aboriginal Englishes by students and Aboriginal teachers and education workers in such classrooms, reflects its use by family and respected community members as a vibrant, dynamic and powerful variety. Some community members, however, oppose their children using anything but SAE and families with SAE skills themselves often insist on its

exclusive use (Clayton *et al* 1996).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities differ about how to achieve English language and literacy development in relation to the status and maintenance of the community language and Aboriginal Englishes and Kriols and there is divergence of views in relation to issues in bilingualism and bilingual education. Some communities are concerned that the only English acquired be SAE while others use an Aboriginal English as one of their community languages. Each case needs to be negotiated in its own context with the views of parents and elders needing to be sought and respected.

Literacy is a key issue in educational disadvantage pertaining to Aboriginal people however 'Western' models of literacy and education may be out of tune with crucial aspects of Aboriginal cultures, beliefs and values. Literacy education for Aboriginal peoples has a regrettable history cultural bias and deficit images, of remedial and inappropriate developmental approaches and assessment models in education resulting in damaging educational and social outcomes from schooling for indigenous people.

Moving away from deficit models involves embedding pluralism and diversity in all the structures of schooling, but also taking seriously the demands for academic achievement which parents are making. Thorough professional development opportunities and preservice for teachers in language and cross-cultural understandings and effective and trusting relationships between communities and schools are of critical importance for the attainment of English literacy. However it is important to guard against the potential intrusion of schooling into indigenous forms of education and socialisation, including through English literacy, as a 'normalising' force which may be incompatible with family and community values.

Community factors may impinge very strongly in literacy education for Aboriginal children and adults through correlation between school outcomes and school attendance patterns; mobility of family groups; community activi-

ties and kinship obligations.

Family and community health are also key factors in educational outcomes. Hearing and vision impairment have specific impact on literacy education; because of the reliance on the aural channel for language input and the role of verbalisation in transmitting knowledge. Social and education problems are most effectively tackled concurrently.

Mainly based in Central Queensland, but also with communities along the East coast, Australian South Sea Islanders, represent a category of Australians who share many of the characteristics of indigenous peoples but also of immigrant, or forcibly recruited populations, and for whom literacy in English is an enduring issue interwoven with identity, home language and wider social aspiration (Cox, Ramsden and Webb 1995).

Literacy education for Aboriginal people is particularly hampered by inadequate sensitivity and relevance to cultural differences.

> *" ... the most challenging issue of all is to ensure that education is available to all Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity ... a new approach can only succeed if the Aboriginal community is fully involved in determining the policies and programs that are intended to provide appropriate education for their community"* (Clayton *et al* vol. 3 citing Joint Policy Statement on Aboriginal Education 1993).

Changes in the world of work and technologies, even in remote communities, have profound impacts on the kinds of literacies Aboriginal people will encounter. Narrow skills-based models of literacy are highly inappropriate in an industrially and technologically advanced society. The kinds of literacies needed for active participation in complex post-industrial society match the growing complexity of social practice. This is as true for remote Aboriginal people and for Torres Strait Islanders, as it is for urban-dwelling non-Aboriginal people and for urban based indigenous learners. A command

of the complex range of *codes, modes* and *meanings* of literacy is universally relevant. (Christie 1985; Drake 1994; Eades 1992, Harris 1990; Malcolm 1979, 1995, Wilson 1996)

3.4 Special needs

While 'disability', 'handicap' and 'impairment' are often used interchangeably, the World Health Organisation has defined these terms as follows:

impairment: this term refers to disturbances at the organ level, deriving from abnormalities in body structure,

disability arises as a result of impairments in terms of the functional performance and activity of the individual, these are disturbances at the person level; while

handicaps are the disadvantages experienced by the individual as a result of impairments and disabilities and reflect the interaction between the individual and the environment (Clunies-Ross 1991: 33).

Relatively few Australians have difficulty using print and other media to manage their learning and to conduct their post-school lives and to enjoy the experiences that print and those other media enable them to share. There are, however, some groups of Australians for whom the print medium is itself an obstacle. For these people the development of literacy skills appropriate to their individual capabilities has proved to be very difficult. We refer here to children who have relatively well defined disabilities (*disabilities* because they are often multiple).

These include children with hearing impairment or deafness (though we do not consider deafness *per se* a disability, simply in relation to the acquisition of English literacy), children who are blind or more mildly visually impaired, and children with 'post-sensory processing problems' (likely to be of neurological origin, though this is often difficult to demonstrate) who are often called the 'learning disabled' or sometimes 'dyslexic'. This last

group warrants separate consideration from 'environmentally induced' literacy problems. They are relatively small in numbers (some one to two percent of the population) and their problems are initially congenital in origin and specialised teaching skills are required to teach them.

It is important to stress that deaf Australians have a rich and full communicative repertoire that includes a full language, Australian Sign Language, and Auslan in its more colloquial form and that sign language is recognised as a significant and fundamental form of communication for deaf children (Katz 1995: 68). Deafness is also a culture in the way other community languages draw on and create a sustaining culture of shared meanings and experiences.

The only sense in which deafness is a disability is its impact on oral language development which precedes and sustains literacy in English. Spoken language and communication ability, the essential tools for learning in regular schools, are acquired through hearing. Because the deaf child misses some or all of the talk surrounding him/her, the effortless learning of the spoken language code is missed through lack of exposure to auditory satisfaction or reinforcement (Harper 1991: 92; Giorcelli 1991: 29).

Through such lack of exposure, deaf children can, for instance, be behind their hearing peers in English skills by the time they enter school and in fact often first learn English by learning to read; in contrast to hearing children who learn to read and write a language they are already using. A late start, in combination with an inability to hear language spoken around them often is the cause of deaf children falling farther and farther academically behind their hearing peers (Giorcelli 1991: 29).

Other children requiring special assistance with literacy are those with a specific learning disability, a 'hidden handicap' because it is not readily apparent, *e.g.*, most people with a specific learning disability are of at least average intelligence but their disability is difficult to detect in 'normal' conversation.

One study has shown that at least ten per cent of the population have a specific reading disability with boys outnumbering girls in this regard by a ratio of four to one (Whiting 1991: 61). Because of the importance of effective reading in determining success in so many fields of endeavour some ten per cent of the population may be unable to reach their potential (Whiting 1991: 62).

Further research is needed for a definitive answer to what causes failure to read. What can be said is that the reasons for specific learning difficulties are varied and include an inability to comprehend the nature of the relationship between the written and the spoken word (how sounds are combined in spoken language to form words); visual problems that interfere with learning to read (*e.g.*, the distortion of print which interferes with the ability to learn printed symbols); neurological factors such as difficulties in sequencing letters, numbers or ideas; dyslexia (impairment of the ability to visualise words) (Davis, R., Dyslectic unlocks mysteries to help others overcome disability, *The Canberra Times*, September 5 1996: 3); and attention deficit (impairment of the ability to attend) (Whiting 1991: 62-64).

While the concept of intellectual disability may be difficult to define through there being no clearly recognised symptoms which characterise it, nevertheless IQ test performance has tended to be the yardstick by which the existence and level of disability have been determined and measured; and this in turn has led to a tendency to relate service provision more to a measured category of disability than to individuals' needs. Specifically, until relatively recently, little attempt was made in schools for students with moderate to severe ranges of intellectual disability to teach them to read, and even in schools for mildly intellectually disabled children, reading instruction was restricted to the teaching of survival reading (Clunies-Ross 1991: 34).

There is growing evidence to suggest that application of a Developmental Model, as opposed to Medical and Deficit Models of intellectual disability, is promoting positive learning outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities (Clunies-Ross 1991: 34, 35). Since the 1970s, for example, a number of

studies of Down syndrome children have shown consistently positive gains in the early development of such children through implementation of early education programs with a behavioural approach to curriculum design and instruction and there are clear implications in the studies for teaching and the design of materials for language and literacy programs, *viz* the need to emphasise 'advancing language skills and facility towards achievement of community equivalent levels and conditions of functioning'(Clunies-Ross 1991: 37, 38, 39).

Studies of reading and Down syndrome children indicate that reading is a high priority for them in the development of spoken language and research reports indicate the use of a carefully-structured behavioural approach as being the most successful. In terms of reading and other children with intellectual disabilities, further studies are needed to determine whether reading can be used to facilitate their speech development. Overall though the value of reading in this regard should not be underestimated (Clunies-Ross 1991: 41).

Each of the groups mentioned above requires special assistance with literacy. The typical problems such learners experience are: problems in accessing literacy learning and the processing of literacy learning, or of expressing and using literacy skills, especially during the acquisition phase, which may be considerably extended for many such children. Problems in all areas need to be addressed in research programs and in regular and special educational practice.

Deaf learners of English literacy have particular problems in accessing literacy in English in ways that blind learners do not; visually impaired learners however have particular difficulties in accessing the materials of literacy in print and other written media. For these learners braille literacy is crucially necessary. Intellectually impaired learners may have no difficulties in sensorily accessing literacy learning but do have special problems in processing such learning and using literacy skills to assist them to order and take control of their lives.

Children with post-sensory processing problems have very great difficulty in either or both encoding and encoding literacy materials. Some children with physical impairments will be developing relatively normally in learning literacy skills, but, and this is especially true of severely cerebrally palsied learners, will encounter great difficulties in expressing and so using these skills.

For all these learners we expresses a strong commitment to the acquisition of appropriate and full communication forms *along* with English literacy.

3.5 Socio-economic disadvantage

Among its many functions two frame schooling's prime roles in contemporary Australia. It is simultaneously concerned with training excellence and uncovering merit but also with minimising inherited or prior-to-school inequalities among learners. The former may be thought of as the 'quality' agenda of schooling, the latter the 'equality' agenda of schooling (Connell, Johnston and White 1992).

'People in poverty' is a very heterogenous grouping. The extent to which material deprivation, (called different things: *e.g.*, poverty, disadvantage, low socio-economic status, not well off and many others) intersects with schooling, and specifically here with the learning of literacy and language forms which may affect, negatively or positively, that condition of material deprivation, is a much disputed matter. Recent Australian research on literacy in and out of schools in urban communities of low socio-economic status has shown that :

> *" ... there were strong similarities between the expectations held by the parents in 'disadvantaged' and 'non-disadvantaged' communities for the schooling of their children -- the social skills, intellectual capabilities, knowledge bases, and dispositions that will stand their children in reasonable stead for life after school. What is striking is the contrast between the good will generally imputed to teachers by parents and the inadvertent ill-will generally attributed in educators'*

> *discourses to parents in 'disadvantaged' communities. ... people in poverty 'need' the institution of schooling to take for granted the substance and significance of their life experiences and aspirations, and to teach, without compromise or apology, the capabilities that they, as parents may not feel expert in imparting or even in effectively monitoring"* (Freebody *et al* 1995: 207).

This study reinforces many others, quoted extensively in it, that identify the collusion between material deprivation, poverty however named, the organisational and curricular life of schooling and especially the determinative role of literacy and talking, and the ways of talking about the interaction between these. This talking attributes agency, the capacity to impact and change the social and economic circumstances of the poor. The discourse of poverty and education expresses a disparity between many 'disadvantaged' parents' good will towards educational endeavours on their children's behalf and some educators' inadvertent ill-will. Some of the ways of talking about education and disadvantage lean towards construing it as an intractable problem that educational intervention over decades has failed to ameliorate.

One role of schools is acutely relevant in resolving such dilemmas. Schools' role as the primary conduit of, and dissemination agency for, the literate capabilities that powerful and opportunity-conferring social relations call on.

Schools are, at the same time, one of society's techniques for giving these socio-cultural relations the guise of naturalness and for making invisible their socially selective origins. In these circumstances the relation between pedagogical, curricular and material circumstances is crucial for the literacy outcomes of those whose 'disadvantaged' background locates them at the predicable end of the lack of success.

It is the practice of 'advantage' for some groups that must be the focus of redress. Those students not well served by schooling do not have 'disadvantage' inhering in them. What they require are systematic efforts by all

educational and training systems to build pedagogies of success, in which success is expected, talked about publicly, and resourced to ensure that it is attained.

To the extent that schooling reinforces the advantages of cultural similarity and consonance of some home practices with those of formal education they ought to impart, directly and explicitly, the reading and writing practices of power in society to learners for whom there is not a relatively seamless connection with the home.

This differential access to an advantaging literate capability as one of the principal justifications for advocating a foundational literacy for all. This must be the fundamental objective of all schools and all teachers in them. But schools and teachers have worn for decades a heavy mantle of social responsibility; to make Australians *Asia literate, socially literate, politically literate or literate as citizens, aesthetically literate, driver literate.* Many other literacies inhabit the language of claims upon schoolings' accountability and teachers' responsibilities.

Governments cannot reasonably declare connections between desired and actual outcomes without providing the means for their achievement. A foundational literacy capability underlies all other literacies society seeks and expects. It must be the paramount objective of literacy policy to contribute positively to ameliorating the correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and lack of access with powerful literacy.

Part IV below, summarises some of the main lines of research and professional concern in the areas of early schooling, the middle years of school, and the later years. We are aware that the Schools Task Force of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (June 1996) in its report Addressing Students' Literacy and Literacy Leaning Difficulties uses a slightly different system: early years: (to year 3), primary years (years 3-6), middle years (years 6-9) and the years 10-12. The brief issued to the writing team for this project uses only three levels. The terms early

schooling, the middle years and the later years are therefore used in a broad and inclusive way so that typically occurring patterns of literacy teaching and learning can be described without a rigid normalisation that takes no account of individual differences. For early years we see a continuation from the preschool and home. After post-compulsory schooling we see a continuation into the world of further education, training and the world of work. In general terms the early years refers to school years to year 3/4, the middle years is from the years 4/5 to years 8/9 and the later years from 8/9 to the compulsory schooling ages. Post-compulsory schooling refers to the school years after 10/11 and to education and training programs which follow or accompany these school-based programs.

In each of these phases of schooling, the distinctive place of literacy is discussed, and the focus of a desirable national literacy policy is outlined briefly.

Part IV: School literacy education

4.1 The early years

The early years of schooling perform the fundamental role of developing the motivation to read and write. This is best accomplished through the use of intrinsically interesting materials which are embedded in clearly-understood, purposeful and worthwhile literacy activities and in the before-school and outside of school experiences of children. Intrinsically interesting materials are likely to be culturally diverse, appropriate and locally selected.

Teachers attempt to capitalise on the active and well-developed oral language resources of young children in constructing literacy learning environments that are highly interactive and that present opportunities for collaborative learning. However for children whose oral language resources are in a language or dialect other than the style of school English the curriculum utilises additional attention is needed to oral language development in English. Ideally teachers draw on the home language and experiences of such children to develop oral and literacy skills in English.

All students are beginning to learn about how school functions. At the same time they are in a transition from a spoken to a spoken-and-literate

repertoire of communication practices. This transition will have begun early in childhood when an emergent literacy can be identified. Becoming a student accelerates and sharpens the transition as students not only learn about the world around them but how language and literacy mediates understanding and representation of that world.

This transition phase entails:

- the growing comprehension by children of print conventions such as 'para-text' features: book format, the left-right print direction of English, the interaction of picture-text, character and narrator language. The stimuli for this growing comprehension is invariably diverse in the print saturated contexts of daily lives and homes and will encompass everyday texts such as food packaging labels, billboards, junk mail, computer texts, catalogues and for many students the conventions of print that are relevant to languages other than English. This 'growing comprehension' is not random but is available to children in socially stratified ways (Clay 1991; Snow and Ninio 1986; Baghban 1984);

- the increasing interaction of oral language orientations (what is meant, interactive, holistic, divergent, experience-elaborative, multi-dialectic, use-knowledge) with growing literate orientations (what is said, monologic, convergent, text-elaborative, standard dialectic, explicit knowledge) (Olson 1982);

- the important role of preschool literacy learning (Breen *et al* 1994; Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowe and Munsie 1995) and joint parent-child reading and writing sessions. 'Joint reading and writing' sessions are culturally specific practices, however, and not all children have access to them. In some cases the specific form of adult-child reading and writing differs significantly according to linguistic, religious and cultural variables, and takes place in languages other than English as well. School literacy in this and other ways is less diverse than the literacies of the community (Cairney, Lowe and

Sproats 1994); and

- for children of non-English speaking background the transition phase ideally will include the important role of bilingual support personnel at school to enable successful transition to English literacy, so that bilingual children's home language is built upon and the child's growing cognitive capacities are transferred and expanded.

4.1.1 Before school

"Literacy is constructed by individuals and groups as part of everyday life" (Luke 1993: 4). Speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and drawing are active social practices which occur in a range of daily situations including preschool centres. Children in these settings learn what can be said or written, how these things can be stated, to whom and under what circumstances. In preschools such learning is offered through planned and clearly demonstrated experiences.

Preschool teachers who are aware of children's language experiences and the demands and expectations of schooling and who understand diversity and individual needs in the kinds of oral and literate competencies that children bring to preschools are in a very strong position to develop early literacy skills and enhance students' successful literacy learning in school settings. During these preschool years teachers offer a variety of curriculum experiences, including play, which support early literacy development.

The significance for language development of the preschool sector is therefore very great. Prior to commencing school, however, children experience and benefit differentially from preschool opportunities.

In its most general sense the preschool sector comprises kindergartens, child-care centres, creches, child-parent centres as well as preschools. Although in many ways the various preschool education experiences are formalised, they do not constitute an educational sector as such. Only in some states (*e.g.*, in South Australia where the Department of Education and Children's Services formally incorporates the school and preschool sectors)

is the continuum of learning which these preschool experiences represent constituted as an organisational and administrative whole.

The possibility of professional development and preservice education initiatives imparting a coherent, continuous and mutually reinforcing professionalism on behalf of early literacy acquisition is hampered to the extent that there is no organisational connection between the preschool and early years of school. This is a crucial transition point where the articulation of philosophies and pedagogies is important but rarely achieved.

Many preschool children are enrolled in bilingual, or ethnic and culturally specific services. In South Australia, for example, ten preschools offered indigenous language programs in 1995: two in Pitjantjatjara, two in Adnyamathanha, four in Ngarrindjeri, one in Kaurna and one in Narungga (Lo Bianco 1995: 24).

Although preschool experiences have intrinsic value and purpose public policy for literacy cannot neglect the often decisive influence of school-preparation and familiarity that early childhood education offers and how unequal access to rich preschool learning opportunities exacerbates wider social and educational inequalities.

4.1.1.1 Family and school literacy

The relationship between family and school literacy is a major issue in the early school years. The value of family and community participation in literacy education has been well documented and found to be " ... of great value. Both formal and informal evaluation of existing programs have yielded evidence to support the belief that family and community literacy programs contribute to improved literacy outcomes for large numbers of children" (Cairney *et al* 1995, vol 1: 31; Kemp 1985 and 1987).

It is the experience of both researchers and educators that, apart from the obvious and broader differences in home background languages and English, there appears to be significant 'mismatch' between the language patterns

used in some homes and those used and expected in schools.

Some research has reported that this mismatch is evident in the general language patterns used in both sites and their effects on the building of knowledge and relationships (Cairney *et al* 1995; Hasan 1987); other studies have focused on the actual procedural and content knowledge that parents, or other adult care-givers, need to have to assist students with school work in ways that are both accurate and appropriate to the routines and conventions of the classroom (*e.g.*, Breen *et al* 1994); and still others have drawn attention to the organisation of learning routines and interactions and the differences found between home and school literacy learning (*e.g.*, Freebody *et al* 1995).

In addition, research has found that many Australian parents (many from low socio-economic backgrounds or those from language and dialectal backgrounds different from the school's forms of English) have experienced frustration in assisting with homework and home reading sessions in English. There is often a mis-match because of unfamiliarity with the special ways of interacting and talking about reading and writing that are used in children's classrooms ('Miss Smith doesn't do it like that!'). This mis-match between home and school language and culture patterns has denied to such children the assistance other children benefit from and has had the effect of distancing some groups of parents from a more active participation in the wider educational effort which is beneficial to securing English literacy proficiency.

Along with the educational levels of parents, their economic circumstances, language and cultural and other 'mis-matches' between school and home routines and values impact directly on how readily students fit into classroom routines. Children's familiarity with the reading and writing practices that are given sanction in the school is a critical early variable in their success with learning in the early years. Any capacity for children to attain such familiarity is influenced to a large degree by schools' capacities to utilise the linguistic and cultural resources that different groups of learners bring to the literacy classroom.

4.1.2 Early indicators of difficulty

This diversity of background conditions that are relevant to literacy learning presents serious challenges for teachers in the early school years. Most accounts of literacy in the school years rightly emphasise the significance of early acquisition of literacy. Often in such accounts literacy has been defined in narrow terms that focus on the *code-cracking* tasks presented to early learners (Stanovich 1986).

The problems experienced by many young (and older beginning) learners are made highly visible to teachers and parents on virtually a daily basis: problems in spelling, punctuation, sounding out of sounds and words, appropriate intonation in reading and grammar in writing and many others. Many of these 'problems' are part of the students' acquisition of literacy skills, errors as hypotheses the learner tries in implementing a growing literacy skill. Through intervention and practice these low level problems are transformed into fluent control of the underlying systems of literacy. Teachers' continual surveillance is both to allow developmental sequences to follow their course as well as to determine when to intervene for explicit instruction.

When such low level problems are in fact indicators of actual failure to learn they are often only a more obvious demonstration of school difficulties than the less visible signs of literacy problems, such as a failure to understand what is read, failure to structure or sequence written pieces, failure to make enabling or relevant inferences, or failure to understand critically what is read or written. An important problem arises here. The relatively high visibility of *code-cracking* is neither proof of their centrality nor an argument that they should form the exclusive core of the curriculum of the early years. Rather, it points to the necessary inclusion of systematic instruction in *code-cracking* in the early phases of learning as one important dimension of an early literacy curriculum.

Long after the code has been cracked, highly literate individuals may still exhibit signs of code problems, *i.e.* instances of mis-spelling or poor

grammar. For early literacy cracking the code is more about understanding how the literacy system works than about the development of a permanent capability.

In summary, attention to spelling, punctuation, grammar in writing, and other *code-cracking*, is crucially important for all learners of English literacy, but must be provided alongside opportunities to engage meaningfully with the other resources which together constitute effective literacy.

4.1.3 The consequences of failure: The learning outcome

Schools rely heavily on reading and writing as the means of imparting knowledge. It follows that access to knowledge across the entire curriculum is obstructed to the extent that literacy capabilities are inadequate. Even when literacy capabilities are in fact adequate, in some abstract or general sense, they may be inappropriate to particular domains of knowledge. In important respects contemporary schooling is a process by which students are inculcated into the literate ways of thinking and acting across disparate fields of knowledge and with patterns of literacy that are particular to those fields.

It is therefore a necessary priority for schooling to equip students to come to appreciate that accepted knowledge in modern societies is dependent on literacy for both its original development and its later transmission. Formalised 'ways of knowing' about the world; disciplines such as science, mathematics, history *etc*, are crucially dependent on reading and writing.

These disciplines could not exist in their current forms nor could they exert the influence they do in a purely oral culture.

This means that attending to the literacy development of all learners will demand long-term commitment and support, across all age ranges and all areas of the curriculum. Teaching which explicitly addresses language across all areas of the curriculum and therefore which requires a sustained commitment from the whole school is needed to achieve the acquisition of

literacy capability.

However, as will be discussed later, disciplinary specialisations and the particular literacy practices these specialisations require, mean that we cannot assume that the 'foundational' aspects of literacy are quickly and unproblematically able to be secured in the first years of school.

4.1.4 The consequences of failure: *The cultural outcome*

Considerable research evidence addresses the amount and range of reading and writing activities engaged in by those students who have developed what is considered to be effective versus inadequate education in the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* of literacy. The findings indicate that students who have developed effective literacy early in the school years have, by the end of their primary school education, read and written hundreds of thousands more words, across a vaster range of knowledge domains and genres than those with poorly developed capabilities.

This writing and reading represents no less than an accumulating familiarity with the cultural mores, values, practices and expectations of Australian society. This is an extraordinarily important finding since access to, and comfortable functioning in, the cultural systems of the society is a crucial determinant of the successful negotiation of its opportunities.

Essentially then, in the first eighteen months of formal schooling, young learners are already accommodating to, and developing differential competence in, the literate culture of which they are to form a part. This implication pertains most immediately to the learners' involvement with school knowledge more than to their acculturation into the school which is generally only indirectly facilitated.

Acculturation into the powerful, assumed and expected literate practices of society applies to all students. Students from home backgrounds other than the ones implied as the clientele of most Australian curricula are greatly dependent on the school to mediate access to and to deliver control over the

cultural patterns of the wider society. Many of these cultural patterns are coded in language. It follows that control over the *register* of powerful language use, both its spoken and literary forms, is a particular responsibility for schools in relation to children from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds.

The conventions of public exchange and debate, both within public institutions and within disciplinary specialisations, apply to all learners regardless of their home backgrounds. It is a clear part of the responsibility of schools, within and beyond the transmission of subject-specific knowledge, to equitably and effectively transmit control over and knowledge of the systems and practices of literacy validated by the wider national culture, to all learners.

A *foundational* approach to literacy however, acknowledges that the different linguistic and cultural resources of the learner are both a resource for the acquisition of the prestige and required forms of the curriculum but also that this background knowledge and skill ought to form part of a permanent repertoire that the school should cultivate in the intellectual and cultural interests of the individual child.

4.1.5 The consequences of failure: *The motivational outcome*

It has been frequently demonstrated that learners' sense of themselves as poor readers and writers has major implications for their engagement with educational activities.

Adult educators report that adults with a history of failure in their school years face a daunting task of overcoming their negative self-perception as readers and writers, and thus as learners. This negative definition of themselves as failures stands, independently of their *actual* capabilities, as an obstacle to their attempts to become more fully literate in their adult years (Cumming, Falk and Freebody 1992).

Such adults report consistently that a 'cascade' of motivational obstructions

(Johnston 1985; Stanovich 1986) begins in the early years of schooling, and is acted out in a long-established pattern of avoidances and dependencies through the school years and into adulthood.

De-motivation becomes independent of the actual learning capabilities of some adults. This is one of the reasons why many adult literacy educators are reluctant to institute testing regimes, believing that further demonstrations of failure will serve only to exacerbate their students' negative motivation, regardless of any diagnostic value such testing may offer.

4.1.6 Vaccination: A flawed way to understand early literacy

Curriculum patterns and teaching attitudes reinforce these negative outcomes of early literacy failure and sometimes have the effect of entrenching them. A pedagogical sequence evident in most curricula, based on the notion that the *proper place* for explicit literacy education is the first two to three years of formal schooling, takes over.

Many educators hold the traditional and well-entrenched idea that for the majority of learners, at or about the fourth year of school, 'learning to read and write' becomes, and remains, 'reading and writing to learn'. After the first few years of school, the reading materials rapidly become more complex (in terms of their vocabulary, clause-grammar, and generic structure), lengthier, less conceptually concrete and familiar, and less supported by explanatory illustrations.

In this way the curriculum itself embodies a theory of literacy development. While this is indeed appropriate for many students, it is clearly disadvantageous for many others. The curriculum literally leaves the less capable, less appropriately-taught reader and writer behind, rapidly and comprehensively.

As a correlate, teachers' views and consequent teaching practices are often perceived to reflect and reinforce this 'abandonment'. Lessons and assessment activities increasingly assume students' ready working knowledge of

the *codes, modes, and meanings* of school materials after the first few years of formal schooling. In addition, generally, the tempo, density and abstraction of the curriculum afford little time or place for what is regarded, understandably but inappropriately, as 'retrospective repair'.

Even where new literacy skills are to be learned (e.g. comparing and contrasting, new essay forms) they require extensive scaffolding by teachers. It is often assumed by content teachers, teachers of the subject areas, that imparting familiarity and control over these forms is being addressed, or should be addressed, within the subject English.

Supported by the increasing tempo and density of curricula as the school years progress, the views of many teachers of older students is that the responsibility for successful literacy acquisition, and thus for its failures, lies with the teachers of the younger grades. Even those teachers of the middle school years who believe that part of their job is literacy education, regardless of the subjects they teach, find it difficult to address literacy-related problems. This raises serious questions about the organisation of schools for maximal literacy learning and the pre- and in-service education teachers receive on the place of literacy learning in the curriculum (Christie *et al* 1991; ALLC 1995).

Many students from home backgrounds where languages other than English are spoken (among whom a large minority enter schools in Australia after the beginning of the school year or are enrolled below their chronological age or pre-migration ability level) need up to seven years to develop the academic literacy of their English mother-tongue peers (Cummins 1981; Collier 1995; McKay *et al* forthcoming). This loss of explicit literacy support can have a dramatic effect on their entire educational career.

It must be an explicit objective of literacy policy to respond to the needs of students who have not gained the literacy capability required for successful achievement of school outcomes by year four.

- First, literacy planning must aim to stimulate and support more effective literacy education in the early years of schooling; and

- Second, literacy policy and planning must strongly advocate that explicit literacy education is the province of all teachers, at all phases of the education and puts forward proposals for the enhanced and expanded preservice and professional development activities which will be required to achieve this goal.

How to teach reading and writing to young students, whatever their spoken language background or social and economic circumstances, is one of the most strongly contested and debated fields in education. Divergent positions, informed variously by direct experience, sometimes incompatible theories and philosophies of literacy and education, and long traditions of research in various disciplines, sustain coherent positions about literacy pedagogy.

Australian educators and literacy academics have long been at the international forefront of many of these debates. The great complexity of the practice of literacy education makes a diversity of approaches inevitable.

While it is not within the scope of this volume to try to 'settle' these debates, or to privilege one or other approach, it is both possible and indeed necessary to set out those areas of conclusive convergence in the research literature.

4.1.7 Broad generalisations about literacy pedagogy for the early years

In contrast to oral language the literacy *codes, modes* and *meanings* inherent in and given life by a culture are not a natural ecological evolution. These learned behaviours are the products of the selective traditions and relations within a particular society.

Even in oral language development there is substantial implicit and explicit enculturation of young members of a culture into its spoken language forms. It follows that knowledge of and facility in the literacy *codes, modes,* and

meanings of a learner's society does not flow automatically from being born a member of that culture. As with other cultural practices, literacy practices are the result of the explicit and implicit experiences and presentations which parents, teachers and others undertake with students. In plural societies any assumption, however implicit, of literacy's acquisition is even more problematic.

One consequence of this belief that literacy is a *cultural accomplishment* is to reject any notion that literacy is achieved purely and simply through an immersion in naturalistic settings and activities of which literacy forms a part:

- students are best served by literacy learning experiences that make explicit the knowledge about the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* involved in becoming a reader and writer. When such explication becomes focused on only one or two of the sets of capabilities that need to be coordinated and learned by readers and writers, or when such explication becomes rigid and non-interactive, valuable literacy learning opportunities are lost, and literacy capabilities can become fragmented and partial. Similar consequences result when such explication is the sole pre-occupation of the literacy curriculum and is therefore 'abandoned' by the other parts of the curriculum and the teachers who are engaged in those parts of the curriculum;

- when some literacy capabilities are assumed to be acquired implicitly, automatically as part of other activities, literacy learning opportunities may be squandered and the outcomes may become distorted by the particularity of the experiences in which the learner is engaged rather than being more systematically addressed in a planned manner. This often occurs because the student has failed to pick up on the 'natural' processes of literacy acquisition. Even researchers and educators who focus on explicitness differ in the specific aspect of literacy to which they allocate most attention. Some have directed attention to the codes of literate language, in particular

to the alphabetic code; others have paid most attention to the grammatical conventions of clauses and sentences; other researchers have mainly addressed the conventional structures of texts with various social functions these texts perform; others have addressed the sensitivity and clarity of responses to, and production of, literary writing; and finally some researchers who advocate explicitness in literacy teaching have focussed on the critical analysis of reading materials;

- there is, however, a growing body of evidence that converges on the proposition that literacy education programs that rely *solely* on implicit, indirect, or discovery learning of literacy capabilities can have particularly negative effects on the progress of students whose cultural or linguistic knowledge and experiences do not closely match that of the teacher or that which is taken for granted in the curriculum; and

- there is wide agreement that students from language backgrounds other than English, whether indigenous or immigrant in origin, or who are speak a dialect of English other than that taken for granted in schooling, are best served by explicit teaching within a context of rich language experience involving bilingual and ESL or public/standard English support, in the context of regular classroom learning (McKay *et al* forthcoming; Clayton *et al*; Malcolm 1979).

Skills-based approaches to early literacy learning and teaching have long-standing support from many years of research. As long ago as 1967, for example, Chall reviewed the available research literature on skills-emphasis versus meaning-emphasis at the word level in early reading programs and concluded that the research *strongly and consistently favoured* the skills-emphasis in the early stages of literacy education, even though she conceded that teachers often had mixed orientations rather than pure or strong forms of either. Since that time, many studies have supported Chall's conclusions: Adams (1990), having reviewed more than 600 studies of early reading

success and failure, itemised the following among her general conclusions:

- *"Letter recognition skills are strong predictors of reading success. It is not simply the accuracy with which children can name letters that gives them an advantage in learning to read, it is their basic familiarity with the letters;*
- *Learning to recognize and discriminate the shapes of letters is a difficult process requiring support and encouragement. Ideally, letter knowledge should be well established before children reach first grade ...*

- *Approaches in which systematic code instruction is included along with the reading of meaningful connected text result in superior reading achievement overall, for both low-readiness and better prepared students ...*

- *Programs for all children, good and poor readers alike, should strive to maintain an appropriate balance between phonics activities and the reading and appreciation of informative and engaging texts ..."*
  (Adams 1990: 123-128)

The consequences of preferring a skills-emphasis versus a meaning-emphasis in early instruction on different groups of school-children have been hotly debated. Stahl and Miller (1989), for example, reviewed many studies of early literacy learning and showed that skills-based, explicit instructional programs offer more opportunity for groups of students who are not traditionally well-served by schooling, particular language minority and low socio-economic groups, and that meaning-based programs can systematically disadvantage such children in school.

At the same time a rich meaning-based environment, both oral and written, is needed as a context for effective language and skills development for these children. Children from home backgrounds in which languages other than English, or varieties of English other than the prestige form given sanction

in the school, need to develop an oral English language base, one which is appropriate and adequate for the regular curriculum, to support this literacy skills base. Australian teachers, as noted in section 2.4.1, rarely use teaching methods that exclude techniques, ideas and systems that might be suitable for particular children or which are more suited to some aspect of literacy.

Even so, some caution is needed in interpreting the above results. Learners not traditionally well served by schooling are often those whose cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds are not consonant with the prevailing cultural mores and linguistic routines of schools, occasionally these background variables are even stigmatised, usually implicitly, sometimes overtly, by schools. An emphasis on meaning, in preference to isolated skills, in early instruction necessarily draws on the cultural mores and background with which the learners are able to participate and 'make meaning'. Skills approaches may be less culturally-laden and this could account for the apparently enhanced opportunities provided for disadvantaged learners with such approaches.

Optimally, skills development for all children should be an explicit and priority objective but one that is delivered richly embedded within meaningful pedagogies.

4.1.8 Necessity and sufficiency: Criteria for program evaluation

It is important to view these large-scale studies in the light of an assessment about necessity-and-sufficiency. The research shows unequivocally that explicit instruction is necessary for all students and most dramatically for students with experiences, understandings and skills which do not equip them well for the formal academic demands of school. However, this most emphatically does not lead to the conclusion that such learning is *sufficient* for a comprehensive early literacy program.

Central to achieving the goals of equitable and comprehensive literacy policy

is the view that explicit literacy education is the province of all teachers, at all phases of the educational enterprise. This claim is based on an awareness that :

- early literacy education is not at all like a *vaccination,* offering protection against later problems. Rather literacy involves the on-going accomplishment of practices that require continual revisiting and expanding and for which whole-school and across-the curriculum approaches are needed; and

- appropriate achievement in contemporary learning settings, in and out of school, is built on continually-developing capabilities in communication. A central aspect of such communication entails reading and writing. For language minority children this means communication in English as well as support in the mother tongue wherever possible. Ideally learners ought to be able to continue the conceptual and general cognitive development which will have been initiated in the mother-tongue whilst they acquire English and as a prelude to academic English literacy.

For these propositions to be effectively implemented, individual teachers, and the school systems in which they work, need to be able to provide opportunities for on-going literacy development. Problems that may arise in acquiring and sustaining the literacy capabilities aimed for in the early school years, and in facing the literacy demands presented progressively through the middle school years, must not be relegated to the 'remedial margins'. It is both much more expensive and ultimately less successful overall that systemic attention to literacy and language development occur across the curriculum and by all teachers. Such opportunities for on-going literacy development must recognise, however, that children learn differently, at different rates and in different ways influenced by their previous experiences of school literacy and other language, cultural and social factors as well as personal or individual characteristics.

Continual attention to children's growing literacy is therefore a responsibility shared by all teachers. Drawing on specialist input it is essential to reinforce and make literacy more effective in the early years. This specialist input will often involve one of the following categories: teachers of English as a second language; teachers trained in the special needs of learners such as those indigenous students who speak a dialect of Australian English and are therefore learning public English as a second dialect; teachers of languages other than English, and other support teachers for the schools' learner groups, such as children who are sensorily, physically, emotionally or intellectually disabled. sensorily, physically, emotionally or intellectually disabled. For many students bilingual support is highly beneficial so that their general learning can continue while they acquire English, otherwise their academic conceptual growth is slowed, or even suspended, until they have sufficient English to continue in regular curriculum provision.

It is a crucial ingredient of the success of literacy planning that systematic and non-stigmatised literacy support across the school years be encouraged. This will require focussed professional development for subject area teachers, support for cooperative and team teaching and support for and commitment to whole-school planning that makes the achievement of improved literacy a shared and paramount goal of schooling. It has been well documented in many countries that the cost of later 'remediation' of early school failure, alongside the consequences of inadequate literacy capabilities in the workplace, together present too urgent a social and economic problem to remain in the 'margins of apology' in schools.

These arguments are not new to teachers, nor do they constitute a criticism of teachers' commitments to effective literacy education provision. Rather, it is a matter of meeting the challenge of achieving higher literacy standards for all learners in the more complex literacy environment that Australian society is entering, thereby overcoming the personal and social-economic cost of failure for those students who do not achieve adequate and appropriate literacy capability.

Current infrastructure arrangements in schools, the priorities they represent, and their organisational over-reliance, in many cases, on a view of the relationship between knowledge and learning development on the one hand, and age on the other may need reform. Aiming to engage all teachers in the goal of universal foundational literacy and a wider and deeper active literacy for all requires a high level of cross-curriculum and whole-school commitment to literacy education, drawing in the specialist expertise of literacy educators and other specialist professionals.

Planning for foundational literacy for all learners in the early years is a responsibility of the whole school and school-wide planning must receive the support and encouragement of education and training systems since literacy's domain is cross-curricular and cross-sectoral.

4.2 The middle years

4.2.1 Introduction

There is no natural or universally accepted administrative category for the middle years of schooling. The term is used here to refer mainly to the upper years of primary school but also to the early years of junior secondary schooling. Although in most ways these middle years are an elaboration and intensification of the pattern well-established in the early years, some distinctive modalities begin to operate in the middle years.

In general the middle years are characterised by:

i) the relatively rapid separation of areas of knowledge into school subjects. which make distinctive reading and writing demands and constitute, more or less, distinctive reading and writing domains;

ii) the widespread assumption on which the secondary school years tend to operate that students can call upon literacy capabilities that are sufficiently well developed and adaptable to cope with increasing, and increasingly distinctive, demands.

The latter belief is found in all educational endeavours. This is despite the well recognised existence of literacy practices that are specific to school subjects. The knowledge transmitted by a particular subject, the acquisition of its content, requires some attention, whether explicitly or through immersion, to the language and literacy practices utilised by that subject. Some part of any new content learning involves acquiring the language and literacy conventions in which that content is codified and through which it is transmitted.

4.2.2 Domains of school knowledge

Each subject, through the discipline/s and traditions on which it rests, presents an orientation to knowledge using particular written, spoken, and symbolic forms. For instance the reading and writing to be done with high school science texts contrasts with the reading and writing of high school English texts, trade manuals, or primary school 'stories' or legal documents.

These differences do not simply consist of differences in specialist terminology, nor even the different format of written materials used by different school subjects. There are also generic and systematic differences in the functions that written texts serve for different subjects, differences in their authorised and approved ways of presenting, explaining and debating information and its implications. Other differences relate to the particular grammatical features that these varying functions and conventions require for their realisation. Finally there are important differences in the ways that the non-verbal accompaniments to language, such as numerical, graphical and pictorial representations of information, need to be used and integrated into the processes of understanding and learning.

Early schooling can help to develop understanding of these important differences, but there are features of these understandings that can only be fully dealt with in the larger framework of teaching activities that constitute learning the knowledge that is specific to the particular subject. It is in this manner that subject area specialists ought to become partners with literacy and the other language/bilingual/dialect and disability trained teachers in

attending to the language and literacy aspects of the subject matter that they are imparting.

As an example of the significance of literacy practices in secondary school subjects, Wignell, Martin and Eggins (1987) studied the language features of geography textbooks (Eggins, Wignell and Martin 1987 provide similarly compelling examples from history texts and Martin 1979 from science texts).

The language of geography is distinctive in some important ways and these particular language forms help to build the knowledge base of the subject. The general purpose of *geography language* is as a disciplinary code primarily functioning to describe, order and explain the observed world. This quite explicit purpose of *geography language* generates and requires *specialist language strategies* to provide:

- *taxonomies* in which the physical objects of the world are placed in categorical relations to one another;
- *classifications* in which technical nomenclature is applied to these objects with the aim of creating groupings and distinctions;
- *orderings* in which these technical, often abstract terms can be used to relate classifications to one another;
- *explanations* where, using these orderings, classifications and taxonomies, explanations can be given about how the world is built and how it got that way.

Learning these language-based tasks does not simply grow from familiarity with the 'old basics' of spelling, decoding and traditional or sentence grammar. These are literacy capabilities that need to be tackled as tasks in themselves. Gaining control of geography entails learning how to use language appropriately to accomplish these textual tasks in the conventionalised way

that competent geographical functioning demands. A learner uses geography's language requirements purposefully to acquire geographical knowledge, and ultimately, full proficiency is required to become a geographer. A students must not only learn to read like a geographer but also to use *geography language* and conventions to write like one.

These language and literacy demands are an integral part of subjects and hence central to learning that subject. Jargon is not simply an obstacle to learning. Rather, the subject-specific language and literacy demands actually constitute a significant part of the business of learning the subject geography, reflecting its particular ways of building knowledge and presenting and explaining that knowledge. "...Translating jargon into common sense is an important social responsibility of all scientists ... (but) ... scientists simply cannot do their jobs without technical discourse" (Martin, 1990: 86).

Technical discourse is both compact, and therefore efficient, and has the added function of coding an 'alternative reality to common sense'. Science organises the world into *things* and *processes:* the *things* draw on *classification* and *composition* and these depend heavily on *diagramming* to represent taxonomical and other classified or compositional relationships; whereas processes are either *classification* or *decomposing*. Science education tends to pattern instructional sequences so that 'scientific method', via inductive reasoning and experimentation, dominate the early and middle years with the presentation of accumulated knowledge left till later in education.

The dependence on process and experimentation, sometimes called 'inquiry', mirror other curricular areas of the middle years. The results of students' inquiries are typically recounted in reports, explanations and experiments with less use of other genres such as biography and expositional writing. Though the latter are far less frequently encountered in textbooks some educational systems do permit and even encourage a wide array of writing in science, including narratives.

Learning how to integrate non-verbal materials into the comprehension of

texts (such as numerical and pictorial representations of information) is a major literacy task for students in the middle years of schooling. These complex tasks require that students gain control of these information-management problems (Morris and Stewart-Dore 1984; Morris 1989). Science literacy, for example, differs radically from common sense and its effective teaching depends not simply on a focus on *field* (science knowledge) but on *genre* (the global patterns of text organisation that package this knowledge) (Martin 1990:113). The stress on *doing* practical science can be inefficient, creating an imbalance with the presentation of accumulated knowledge and the control of the technical and writing realisations required for science literacy.

Many students in the middle years of school need to read and write texts in which language, number and diagram are thoroughly intermixed and in which the meanings conveyed by the texts depend critically on students' abilities to work simultaneously with each of these symbol systems. The wider availability of multi-modal and multi-directional computer texts intensifies this need resulting in a required *technological literacy.*

Technological literacy is both a research tool in the acquisition of knowledge in subjects as well as a distinctive mode of literacy with particular codes and meanings attaching to it. The wider availability of multi-modal texts, especially those which make use of 'hypertext' features, create a need to support students to 'navigate' in a multi-directional manner through texts that are not arranged in linear order. 'Reading' becomes a form of composition as information is arranged and assembled by the user in original ways.

These literacies goes well beyond any traditional conception of the 'old basics', but are nonetheless *foundational.* It is the acquisition of these levels and layers of growing literacy that constitutes literacy success in middle school.

Motivated by this awareness is Elkins' (1989) summary of literacy performance in the middle school years:

> *'The challenge for the 1990s is to build literacy in students at **all** age levels, not just the lower primary school; in **all** students, not just those who have literacy inclination and talent; and in **all** curriculum areas, not just in English' (1989: 304)*

Although there are common foundations for the literacy practices developed in early school years and those called upon in the middle and later school years there are many important differences. Successful long term literacy planning will aim to secure acquisition not only of the common elements in literacy education (these certainly require attention) but also to pay due attention to the particular literacies that different subjects and domains of knowledge require.

Such an approach to literacy, which mirrors the effective management of the *codes, modes,* and *meanings* called for in contemporary societies, locates literacy policy at the heart of educational efforts, regardless of the nominated domain or discipline of interest. Further, such an approach locates all teachers at the forefront of literacy education.

Many teachers, however, require additional training and operate in institutional and curricular circumstances that do not allow them to tackle literacy systematically and effectively. Some need specialist training; this is particularly true of those who will be teaching indigenous students and students who are acquiring English as an additional language as well as other groups of learners with special language and literacy needs.

4.2.3 Capabilities across the curriculum

The preceding section argued that literacy education applies across the curriculum. The focus of much of research and debate on this question has centred around identifying and specifying those literacy characteristics that enable learners to decode, as the means of access to the knowledge embodied in all school subjects. While this attention has been warranted, it is now widely appreciated that school subjects present *on-going literacy demands.* Numerous research studies have shown that the organisation of information

in subject-specific texts presents particular problems to readers and writers in the middle school years (Meyer 1985). An important survey of a large number of research projects conducted with middle-years' students examined these concerns (Beach and Appleman 1984). These studies examined many of the obstacles that students with literacy problems face and how these might be overcome. Among the conclusions were:

- across the primary and secondary school years, students improve in their ability to organise information according to the elements of story structures;

- by the beginning of secondary schooling clear differences emerge between students whose literacy is well developed and those for whom it is not; these clear differences are in students' responses to various forms of literature and expository reading materials;

- an explicit knowledge of literary and expository text patterns is significantly associated with students' abilities to pay attention to important aspects of texts and with their ability to recall those aspects and use them in later work; and

- the evidence suggests that, rather than an overall 'textual competence', students acquire competences at differing rates in differing genres of reading and writing; that is, students vary, depending on the specifics of how they have been taught, in their knowledge and use of the textual conventions of different types of texts (Beach and Appleman 1984).

An important overall conclusion from these studies is that literacy cannot be said to be secured, once and for all, and for all areas of knowledge, by attention to code-breaking capabilities alone in the early years of schooling. The research and the accumulated experiences of many educators leads to a crucial conclusion: in the middle years of school, all students require clear and direct guidance with a variety of the disciplinary contents needed for the rapidly changing literacy demands that face them.

In addition, the middle school years are characterised by the beginning of 'speculations' about future work intentions. Many students begin to form general ideas of the type of work to which they may be suited. Influencing these 'speculations' are their interests, areas of capability, and apparent levels of success which they have experienced in school. Research conducted into adolescents' aspirations indicates that these influences occur at different rates and with differing degrees of confidence and stability for different individuals. A student's capabilities in managing the literacy demands of various aspects of the curriculum is one of the more significant factors setting the limits of those speculations and thereby influencing their future life trajectories and contributions as citizens.

The cumulative damage to individual lives and the community's collective civil, cultural, and economic well-being caused by on-going literacy difficulties is often disguised in the middle years of schooling by assessment and reporting in the terms of the individual school subjects (*e.g.*, 'failure in science'), by modular year-based curricula, in which the pre-conditions for the subsequent year's work are not always clear, and by a general reluctance, or inability, to withhold promotion to the higher grade from students whose literacy capabilities may not be up to the standard required by that year's curriculum.

The notion of autonomous school subjects, each a domain in and of itself, can be counterproductive to coherent literacy education efforts.

To be effective literacy efforts must extend across all school subjects. In the middle years this problem is sometimes compounded by the practice of automatic progression through the school grades. In many cases this 'benevolence' is misplaced. Students usually know if they have literacy problems and are known by their teachers and fellow students to have literacy problems. Their participation in many classroom activities is hampered and the special treatment they receive is most commonly known to be a form of curricular exclusion. Usually stigma also attaches to not staying with their age-cohort. Is it in the best educational interests of students that their

chronological age always takes precedence over their progression through the school curriculum at the tempo that curriculum requires? Chronological age relates only in the loosest way to physical, social and mental development. Problems arising from the stigma of repeating or receiving 'special' literacy provision are a consequence of the rigid normalising of age-grade progression. A more productive literacy policy for schools ought to tackle the deeply entrenched associated dilemmas and consequences of benevolent, but sometimes misguided, progression and promotion policies in the middle years. Together these result in a second-phase 'abandonment' for students for whom conventional literacy education efforts have not been adequate.

For students who are acquiring English as a second language this is a vexed and problematical issue. It is of vital importance that academic performance influenced by a growing English competence not be misdiagnosed as 'not performing at the expected level' according to mother tongue English expectations. ESL students may have high levels of content knowledge and literacy in their first language. For such reasons it is essential for all teachers to have core elements of their preservice training and on-going professional development which address the relation between language, learning and bilingualism.

Considerations of the extent of children's content knowledge and first language literacy must therefore be included in decisions about progression. Students from language backgrounds other than English ought not be prevented from age-related progression and promotion solely on the basis of English language and literacy skills, rather they ought to receive specialist language support to assist their acquisition of English as they continue to learn academic content at an age-appropriate level.

4.2.4 Middle years' literacy: Conclusions

The major conclusions from these considerations of literacy learning in the middle-school years are now assembled together and related to the purposes of proposing what literacy policy which is likely to be effective will include:

- a separation of knowledge domains occurs in the middle school years;

- these domains bring with them distinctively new literacy demands that call on all foundational literacy resources: breaking the codes of texts, participating in the building of meaning in texts, understanding and controlling the varying functions of texts, and critically analysing their cultural content (section 2.3) ;

- in this regard, school systems need to anticipate the impact on literacy demands of the transition from primary to secondary schooling. To this end, programs involving collaboration between primary and secondary school teachers need to be developed more explicitly and as a greater priority than is now generally recognised (Cairney *et al* 1994).

- educators should not confuse capabilities in school subject areas with literacy capabilities;

- an explicit understanding of the ways in which texts work in various subject areas can enhance reading, writing and general learning;

- schools should provide literacy support as a routine aspect of daily classroom life, regardless of the school subject area;

- schools should also aim to provide routine, cross-grade additional support for literacy development, across the curriculum and explicitly supporting each curriculum area;

- as with the early years of schooling, the responsibility for literacy development across the middle years is a responsibility shared by the entire school staff;

- the specificity, uniformity and portability of middle-school literacy practices assumes greater importance when it is recognised that more

Australian students are now geographically mobile than in the past. The turnover of students, and the possible disruption to sequenced learning patterns, places particular demands on teachers in the middle school years to organise cumulative sequences of literacy-learning experiences;

- with the cultural and linguistic diversity of the clientele of schools increasing, teachers cannot be as secure as they may once have been about the similarities of the language, literacy and cultural experiences of their students or of the proximity of those experiences to their own or to the more homogenously conceived 'clientele' of the school; and

- schools should supply ESL support for learners whose linguistic and conceptual development has commenced in a language other than English; and students who speak a variety of English which is different from the prestige form used in and through the curriculum should also receive support for the acquisition of the formal registers of English in such a way that acknowledges the social and cultural validity of the home forms but seeks to widen the learner's repertoire; such support needs to be provided routinely for learners at beginning levels and, most importantly, at key school transition points as a routine aspect of regular classroom practice, and finally that the growing literate competence of those students in languages other than English programs ought to be integrated into a mutually supportive underlying literate capability; and finally the particular needs of learners with sensory, physical and intellectual disability for non-prejudicial diagnostic assessment and for literacy teaching require appropriate preservice and professional development support.

4.3. The later years and the post-schooling sector

4.3.1 The later years

Schooling needs to provide students with a wide and flexible set of understandings about the multiple *codes, modes,* and *meanings* of literacy. These understandings need to form a platform that is as transferable as possible to new settings, disciplines of study and work, and text types, but that all of these literate capabilities need to be revisited and redeveloped as textual and functional demands multiply and become more specialised through the schooling years. These demands come into prominence in the later years.

Mikulecky (1981) and Mikulecky and Ehlinger (1986) have compared the literacy demands of people in three sites: the high school, the technical school (similar to TAFE) and three kinds of workplaces, which they called professional, middle-level, and blue collar. They found that the range of texts and the range of activities that needed to be executed with, and by, those texts is much greater in workplaces than in both kinds of schools. Schools were found to demand generally longer pieces of sustained reading and writing, with their purposes more narrow and tightly bound to assessment demands within the school, than was the case in workplaces.

With respect to reading, Mikulecky concluded:

> *"Students spent less time reading in school than workers did on the job... middle-level workers (clerical/sales/service) encountered a wider variety of reading material which they read more competently and to greater depth (than students) ... workers ... saw reading as more important to their success and did considerably more reading for application than did students" (1981: 417-8).*

Literacy teaching in the later years of schooling may encompass a wide variety of literacy activities, from strictly 'school literacy' in increasingly abstracted contexts to literacy activities which approximate with various

workplace contexts. Even within a securely established academic English program there is great variation. For example, English is compulsory in some but not all Year 12 programs across Australia, and what constitutes the subject English varies greatly although it would ordinarily be the only opportunity for attending to literacy development at this level. In addition the cohort group is very different since there are many 'reluctant' students whose retention at school is often a consequence of restricted labor market alternatives.

There are also transitional cases in the later years where schools offer *job-shadow* and work experience programs which involve engagement with employment-related literate practices. In the case of actual out-of-school literacy practices, the degree and nature of the use of written text is a feature that can vary greatly from site to site and job to job.

Academic school literacy, and later tertiary literacy, are characterised by growing subject abstraction and 'de-contextualisation'. School subjects, ranked along an internal hierarchy, generate highly specialised literacy demands whose characteristics represent an intensification of the literacy demands identified in sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.4 above. The National Statements and Profiles recognise this as the examples from the English, Mathematics and the Arts statements demonstrate:

> *"There are different types of literacy which teachers in all areas of learning share a responsibility for teaching. At the primary level, the classroom teacher has the opportunity to develop literacy skills across the curriculum. At the secondary level, reading and writing of the specialised language and texts in each area of learning must be taught by the subject teacher" (AEC 1994b: 4).*

> *"The process of developing and building up mathematical knowledge through describing, questioning, arguing, predicting and justifying almost always requires a sharing of ideas. ... Mathematical communication skills are needed in order to understand, assess and convey*

ideas and arguments which involve mathematical concepts, or are presented in mathematical forms." (AEC 1994c: 13)

"Arts experiences should promote verbal language and literacy skills ... Students describe, analyse, interpret and judge arts works and acquire artistic vocabulary that enables them to take part in artistic practice and in the discourse of arts criticism, arts history and aesthetic judgement" (AEC 1994d: 9).

Such literacy across the curriculum is as possible in the later years of secondary schooling as it is in the organisationally smoother context of the early years (Kelsall 1996).

The nationally coordinated approaches to curriculum of recent years afford an opportunity to raise the profile of literacy teaching across all Key Learning Areas, years 1-12. Apart from English and Languages other than English the remaining Key Learning Areas of the curriculum, as set out in the statements and profiles, do not " ... take specific responsibility for the acquisition and development of students' ability to speak, listen, read, view and write" (Campagna-Wildash 1994, cited in Stewart-Dore 1996: 11).

In her analysis of these Key Learning Areas Stewart-Dore (pp 12-18) groups them as follows:

Group 1: KLA statements (Arts, Studies of Society and the Environment, Health and Physical Education) *refer explicitly* to verbal and non-verbal forms of literacy both as a goal of study and as a means of supporting other learning;

Group 2: KLA statements (Science and Mathematics) which *imply* that literacy that literacy is a means of representing and communicating information; and

Group 3: the Technology statement which simply dedicates a Content Strand to *Information*.

The Writing Based Literacy Assessment (WBLA) administered by the Senior

Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia consists of a portfolio of work which requires teachers to address the literacy demands of their subject area is a nationally significant initiative for making explicit literacy demands in the academic curriculum where these demands often go unacknowledged. This is a potentially significant achievement in the light of the perceived need for literacy benchmarking to extend into secondary school levels. Dilena and van Kraayenoord's (1996) study of literacy evaluation and reporting found that the WBLA had led to an appreciable increase in the focus on literacy in secondary schools in South Australia.

However, everyday or 'functional literacy' is also of growing relevance for the later years; in discussing this it is useful to consider the distinctions drawn by Heap (1987); explored through the use of an example involving a purchaser of a new type of machinery: a new photocopier, word-processor, oven, jack-hammer, or machine of any type. The manufacturer has provided an instruction manual accompanied by an abbreviated summary set of instructions. There are many buttons on the machine with accompanying symbols and icons. The machine being replaced is of little guidance since it was of a different type.

There are at least three general approaches to making the machine operational:

Option 1: Text-grounded functioning
The purchaser or consumer studies the abbreviated summary set of instructions. They learn about the buttons, but do not know how to perform one critical step in the procedures for use. The table of contents in the manual provides information which locates the section relating to the critical step. The instructions contained in the manual are sufficient to perform that step and the machine works.

Option 2: Text-aided functioning:
The purchaser or consumer studies an abbreviated summary set of instructions. They learn about the buttons, but do not know how to perform one

critical step in the procedures for use. The table of contents in the Manual does not make it clear which section is relevant. There is a section that has some ambiguous drawings showing two ways of performing the critical step. On the basis of what the consumer knows about the old machine, they select one of the ways, and press one of the icon buttons. It does not work. They choose the other way and try again, successfully this time.

This is a case of Mikulecky's 'job literacy' practices, moving back and forth from the 'problem' to the text, knowing that the text contains both more than and less than is needed to know for the particular problem at hand. To solve the problem it is necessary to know the text-machine relation.

Option 3: Text-omitted functioning
The purchaser approaches the machine, and on the basis of their (faulty) knowledge of the old machine, tries (wrongly) to make it work. Just as they are about to perform the incorrect procedure a colleague passes by, corrects their efforts; and obliges by pushing the correct button. This results in immediate success.

There are circumstances and occasions in which any of these three ways of functioning is the most rational, functional, or efficient way to behave, even though, in most classrooms in which literacy is an explicit goal of the educational program, including for literacy assessment, only option one counts.

> *'Thus the problem with definitions of literacy, with classroom materials and interactive practices, and with assessment procedures is that they tend to assume that writing and, in this case reading, are the most and only rational effective means for everyday life when written or writing materials are available' (Heap 1987: 13).*

To that extent, it is important to deal with the point that many classrooms and assessments do not reflect the everyday practical reasoning in which literacy practices are embedded in most sites except school. This is a partic-

ularly significant point when the importance that has recently been placed on enhanced literacy competencies in the 'restructured workplace' is considered, especially in relation to the cross-crediting of vocational courses in school programs.

With respect to the example above, one of the critical questions for later schooling is: Is the person who reads and understands the whole manual, and, three days later, attempts to recall all of the instructions, more or less functionally literate than the person who engages in text-aided functioning? The case of text-aided functioning shows how the task and the machine are themselves defined within certain social relations. In the particular workplace at hand: Can you ask for help? Whom would you ask? Will there be a problem if you ask?

The implications for assessing literacy in the later school years, particularly with respect to the transferring of capabilities into post-school settings are considerable. Heap (1987) outlined some aspects of mis-matches between the real task ecology and the test item. Some tasks and their putative test have a *thick*, or close, match, but most test items constitute *thin* simulations of actual tasks. This applies particularly in the case of adult literacy tests because generally these tests lay claim to a close relationship to the out-of-test context - civil, community, academic, or vocational.

This raises the issue of the necessarily embedded nature of managing literacy tasks, including in school. In the processes of assessment, each simulation entails the presentation of the institutional needs of the school or the training institution, partly by presenting an institutionalised set of literacy practices as if they were the essential or basic ones, as well as by presenting the curriculum's movement through these practices as the description of a developmental progression.

The overall question about literacy here is to what extent do the tasks and judgments made about literacy in the later school years allow some confidence that students will be prepared for some work other than school work.

The point does not apply only to lower-achieving students. In many professions that require high levels of tertiary qualifications, commentators and researchers report the need for improved literacy practices. For example, Del Mar, Lowe, Adkins and Arnold (1996) reported that doctors' handwriting and other aspects of their record-keeping following consultations needed urgent improvement:

> *"The quality of the doctors' records fell short of the standards within the discipline. General practitioners appeared to be most remiss in features that may be important in making best use of records, that is finding information readily. This validates the impression many general practitioners offered us during the recruitment phase that their records were sub-standard" (Del Mar et al 1996: 524).*

Similarly, there is widespread acknowledgment that many tertiary students need reading and writing assistance to meet the particular demands of university study and assessment. This is reflected in the burgeoning growth of tertiary literacy research within Australian universities as well as the expanded need for academic writing and study skills support for higher education students (LA: NLLIA 1997; Baldauf 1996).

The research and professional experiences of employers and post-compulsory education teachers and trainers focuses our attention on the limited preparation in literacy that comes from study in school-based subjects and the tasks and tests they entail. The diversity of text types and of what can be done with and through reading and writing needs to form an important concern of literacy education in the later school years, along with a more explicit treatment of the literacy demands of the specialist subjects themselves.

Much debate has ensued on the relationship of enhanced literacy, employment and national productivity. Literacy enhancement may not directly create employment, but it does have at least three important consequences for post-compulsory educational and work experience:

- in many cases, literacy enhances the flexibility of workers and the range of information, knowledge and procedural repertoires they can bring to bear in enhancing their work, their flexibility and range of skills, their ability to gain more work independence from access to other knowledge, and at the same time their informed interdependence with other work colleagues through enhanced understanding of other ways of working, interacting, and collaborating;

- literacy allows more equity in job access and social and economic mobility for people from minority and disadvantaged groups, and thus contributes to workplaces that are more comprehensively based on productive diversity through enhanced communication capability; and

- literacy removes an additional and powerful means of social, occupational and civic exclusion for individuals, or their dependence on others to mediate such their participation in these realms of public life.

In the later school years, the relationship between school literacy capabilities and the various post-school pathways students face is of critical importance, along with the schools need to produce students who have been able to use their literacy capabilities to develop extensive subject-based knowledge in specialist areas.

In these respects, development in the four categories of resources of literacy: code-breaking, meaning development, text functions, and critical analysis, continue to be prominent educational imperatives. As well, the explicit development of a variety of ways of using reading and writing in practical activities needs particular attention, including a broader range of assessment and monitoring procedures for gauging students' practical capabilities with texts. However in the post-compulsory sector the issue of the transferability of school-acquired and learned literacy capability becomes more crucial.

The later and post-compulsory years comprise a continuum of literacy needs and issues; with, at one extreme, an interface with the world of work or training and at another extreme literacy demands endemic to the subject specific requirements of a hierarchy of organised learning areas. In some there is an almost total dependence on literacy and persuasive language for demonstrating acquired knowledge.

This display is principally activated via generally abstract and de-contextualised writing. It demonstrates subject knowledge, and, in the humanities subjects particularly, draws on the language of evaluation, criticism, debate and proof.

> *"The subjects which offer the greatest potential for academic excellence are those whose internal organisation as a system of reference is most complete -- subjects which have their own technical language, their own notational systems, their own problems and theories ... These are the subjects which require a mental posture of abstraction from reality in order to deal with them on their own terms, the ability -- inspired or enforced -- to enter into a self-enclosed world whose points of reference are purely internal" (Teese 1994: 83)*

Part V: Adult literacy, numeracy and ESL education

5.1 Adult literacy, numeracy and ESL education

It has been established that schooling needs to provide students with a wide and flexible set of understandings and capabilities in the multiple *codes*, *modes* and *meanings* of literacy. In the previous section it was argued that these capabilities and understandings need to be as transferable as possible to new settings, disciplines of study and work and types of texts. This latter perception is one of the major outcomes of research and thinking about literacy in industrialised and developing nations which has emerged from intensive research and evaluation activities of recent decades: the context bound nature of many literacy practices (Street 1994; 1991).

Formal schooling has an obligation to impart capability and experience for students in the dominant forms of these *codes*, *modes* and *meanings* of literacy as a foundation for further learning as well as an expectation that all students will have the capacity to transfer these understandings and capabilities to the new contexts and roles that they will play in their civic and work lives. Given the remarkable and accelerating rapidity of social and technological change not all these contexts and roles can be predicted.

Post-compulsory education deals with transition from school to a range of

destinations all of which have specific literacy and discourse demands. These forms of education rely on lecturers, teachers, trainers and supervisors whose selection is derived from their expertise in the subject matter, or content skill, of the particular field but who are frequently unaware of the linguistic demands of the field or of the adult learners induction into it.

In recent thinking about the 'later years' and post-compulsory education there have been attempts to specify the 'social domains' in which and for which literacy capability is required. One way of providing a schema for these is as follows, adapted from the National English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence Framework (ACTRAC 1994):

- Procedural communication *performing tasks*
- Technical communication *using technology*
- Personal communication *expressing identity*
- Cooperative communication *interacting in groups*
- System communication *interacting in organisation*
- Public communication *interacting in the wider community*

This descriptive framework for understanding the communication settings and the capability and functioning typically required in each indicates the breadth and complexity of the repertoire of literacy capabilities encountered in post-compulsory school settings and underscores the importance of addressing the transferability of the more focussed literacy practices with which schooling is concerned.

There are other ways of characterising these complex social settings and their broad impact on literacy practices. The New London Group's Multiliteracies Framework (1996) identifies three 'domains of life, the public or civic, the community and the economic. Bradshaw (1993), adapting McCormack has enumerated four: Literacy as knowledge, literacy as self-expression, literacy as public debate and literacy as procedure.

In a similar vein the development by Commonwealth and State agencies of the Key Competencies expresses a related interest in formulating an overarching language for considering both the particularity of given contexts and what education and training ought to aim to achieve in such contexts and settings without losing sight of the overall and wider needs. The Key Competencies represent a formal outcomes linkage between schooling and the post-school context including the world of work and draw attention to the need for the post-school sector to retain explicit attention to literacy and numeracy competence as integral and enduring goals of the training and work environments.

The Key Competencies are:

- Collecting, analysing and organising information
- Communicating ideas and information
- Planning and organising activities
- Working with others and in teams
- Using mathematical ideas and techniques
- Using technology

Any notion of Key Competencies separated from the wider cultural context in which these competencies are located and in which their performance has meaning for the participants is unlikely to be effective. Accordingly, a Cultural Understandings Competency must be seen to pervade and shape the others or to be dealt with additionally to them.

There is a complex relationship between the Key Competencies and the manner of their utilisation within communication in workplaces (NBEET 1996: 29). Each of the Key Competencies is underpinned by communication patterns identified above from the National English Language Literacy and Numeracy Competence Framework (ACTRAC 1994). Neither *collecting, analysing and organising information and ideas*, nor *planning and organising of activities* and most evidently not the *communication of ideas and information* can be successfully enacted without the literacy, language and numeracy procedural, system and cooperative communication required.

Indeed, the associated cultural (and in many Australian workplaces *cross*-cultural) competence also serves as a precondition of success. The Key Competencies are inconceivable without underpinning and comprehensive language competences.

Many other industrialised countries have developed statements of the competencies which all who participate in education and training programs are expected to be able to achieve. Indeed the OECD's increasing interest in the questions of literacy, numeracy and basic education and the various systematic examination of comparative literacy rates in various countries points to a growing belief in the relevance of human capital asset theorisations of education and training in the context of the emergence of post-industrial economies in which knowledge and skills education levels (all clearly sustained by literacy and numeracy capability) are considered key determinants of competitiveness, innovation and enhanced economic performance.

It is important however, not to make too direct a linkage between education levels and economic performance, and, specifically here, about the correlation between low literacy levels and unemployment, economic competitiveness and other factors. (Black 1996). At best these relationships are long term and indirect rather than short term and direct

5.2 Life-long learning for all

The provision of adult language education in Australia is more complex and market driven than the provision of schooling. The post-compulsory sector is influenced by changes in policy in a more immediate way than are the school and University sectors.

However, the growing need for 'second chance' opportunities for large numbers of school leavers and adults, through access and pre-vocational education and training and adult community and further education, so strongly correlates with labour market needs and with contemporary understandings of macro-economic performance that public authorities will

need to consider its formalisation.

Some key characteristics of the post-compulsory sector are:

- there is no *entitlement* to any form of post-compulsory education other than 510 hours of settlement English for immigrants. Participation in existing programs is dependent on employer promotion, personal motivation or labour market requirements or obligations to claim or become eligible for certain entitlements;

- more than half of publicly funded vocational education and training is provided by private industry/enterprise or community based providers through open tender arrangements. Rarely are literacy or language an explicit requirement such tenders; and

- university enrolment is increasingly being made available to overseas and local fee-paying students.

The provision of adult literacy/numeracy and ESL education comprises:

- the senior years of schooling, post-compulsion, leading to higher school certificates and tertiary entrance examinations of various forms as well as Technical and Further Education (TAFE) entry, with a variety of cross-credit and dual recognition arrangements. Most of the educational activity at this level is geared towards students who are intending to study at tertiary level and teaching tends either to assume literacy has been 'dealt with' at earlier levels of schooling or an explicit focus on literacy and language exists it tends to focus on academic writing. Higher school certificates are often regarded as having been 'captured' by Universities as an entrance assessment mechanism rather than operating in the wider interests of general education;

- a variety of work schemes which are tied to apprenticeships or

traineeships which are in turn linked to formal vocational education and/or 'on-the-job' training. Although there are some literacy, numeracy and ESL modules contained in these schemes more commonly they operate on the assumption that the students are sufficiently literate and numerate and English proficient to undertake the course of study and work training. The offering of the Small Business Traineeship in Victoria has shown, however, that although 75% of the participants are found to need literacy and numeracy support few employers choose the literacy/numeracy module which is available within the Traineeship;

- a collection of pre-vocational training and access programs forms a key part of the post-compulsory education and training sector. Most 'stand-alone' programs that offer adult literacy, numeracy and English as a second language for adults come under this category. Many entry-level vocational certificates include integrated teaching of literacy and numeracy (*e.g.*, certificates offered within the Food and Automotive industries) while other certificate programs cross-credit to literacy and numeracy modules in certificates specifically concerned with literacy and numeracy. In many other entry-level vocational certificates, however, the language/numeracy/literacy capability of participants is simply assumed to be adequate and appropriate to the demands of the course, an assumption which is often unwarranted;

- the vocational education and training (VET) sector. Certificate and diploma courses in vocational education and training programs are industry-specific and whether they address literacy, ESL or numeracy needs depends on whether language competencies form part of the industry standard. There has been a great deal of productive development and progress in VET programs in recent years;

- a range of employment linked with schemes of on-the-job training. In virtually all employment communicative competence is assumed to be adequate and appropriate and professional development programs

rarely address literacy/numeracy/language needs; and

- finally, the provision of adult literacy/numeracy and ESL education comprises schemes of unemployment support linked with labour market programs. The Special Intervention Program (DEETYA) has been the principal vehicle for the provision of English as a second language, adult literacy and numeracy education and training for those displaced from employment or otherwise seeking work. The SIP will be phased out by the end of 1997 and it will be important to ensure that a strategic and systematic approach to the provision of English as a second language, adult literacy and numeracy education and training in the various labour market assistance strategies that will replace the SIP are put in place.

These forms of provision for adult communication education do not represent a coherent or linked single system. Rather, the forms of language/literacy and numeracy provision falls into three types of training and education.

First, there are courses and programs which *deliberately and explicitly* aim to teach literacy, numeracy and ESL. These may be called 'front-end' programs. Although language and literacy are explicitly targeted in front-end courses the actual program content may vary greatly and may include general education or be tailored specifically to further education and training, or various specific purpose English programs (e.g. English for doctors, writing for scientists or some other profession or trade).

Second, there are courses whose content is integrated into other forms of vocational education and training (mixed-focus programs) which may cross-credit with other vocational education and training accredited courses.

Finally, some curricula in workplace on-the-job programs recognise literacy and numeracy and ESL in a workplace integrated manner. The Workplace English Language and Literacy Program is one example of funded schemes along these lines. The integration of literacy competencies into industry

standards and subsequently into industry training certificates is well represented by the Food and Automotive industry entry-level and certificate training arrangements.

This mix of course types balances two professional considerations that research and teaching have concluded are needed for effective improvement of communication: *contextualisation* (this is essential for effective learning since language is always learned in context) with *explicitness*.

The participants in these programs are an extremely diverse group of individuals whose experiences tend to fall into three broad groups.

First, there are adults with literacy difficulties in English who have not acquired the foundation literacy normally achieved in the early to middle years of schooling. Some have successfully completed a given level of schooling but have not acquired a portable literacy, a literacy able to be transferred to the appropriate context of work, training or further education that the learner desires. There are differences between men and women, differences due to age and social position and innumerable personal characteristics and family situations which are relevant to the setting in which the learner will best acquire literacy for their needs and the type of program that will be most effective for them. Flexible delivery and localised adaptation are essential requirements for success.

Many of these adults have had disrupted education or suffered health or family trauma or problems, others are disabled sensorily, physically or intellectually in ways that have hindered literacy acquisition. Social, emotional and personal factors play a part. For many family poverty or social deprivation have contributed. Many participants in adult literacy programs attribute their lack of success with literacy to wide category of 'negative school experiences'. For these people schooling has often been a demotivating and unhappy experience.

Participants in these programs also include Australians of recent or

longstanding immigrant origin. Many, including Australian-born adults, have language backgrounds other than formal public English. These learners often have not received adequate assistance to bridge the gap between their spoken forms of language and the literate practices of either their first languages or of English literacy.

Finally, a large and growing proportion of participants in these programs are adults who have successfully completed schooling and who have attained some literate capability at school. Among these are also many who have adapted to work settings in previously adequate ways. Radical workplace and technological change place additional and more complex or sophisticated communication demands on many adults that they are unable to meet.

A survey of five hundred students in SIP courses found that virtually all participants were very positive about the language and literacy gains they made in the programs they attended. There were differences, however, between the participants in ESL programs and those in literacy programs. Demand for, and motivation to attend, adult literacy courses under the SIP was significantly lower than for the ESL programs.

Most adult literacy learners were of the view that improving their reading and writing would not assist them in gaining employment, whereas ESL learners, for the most part, were committed to acquiring English believing that their chances of attracting employment at a level comparable to the pre-migration standard depended on speaking English well. On average the literacy students had lower formal education levels compared with the ESL students.

The researchers commented that: " Those who are not motivated to participate have had poor school experiences, little or interrupted education, low occupational profiles and other personal barriers" (Plimer and Reark 1995: 2).

Whatever the reasons for communication education and training and whatever the circumstances of the participants it is clear that more systematic support

is needed for all adults to attain both foundational English literacy and the specialised literacies for further education, vocational training, work and civic participation. All parts of devolved labour market training (as well as adult and continuing education, vocational and further education systems) need to operate in coordinated fashion to address these literacy/numeracy and English language needs.

In addition to the ethos of a 'second chance' education, the rights and opportunities for individuals Australian economic and social interest dictate that comprehensive and systematic adult education is urgently required.

A recently completed national research study has found that significant and quantifiable gains in productivity, efficiency and economic competitiveness can be linked directly to workplace English language, literacy and numeracy training. The study was able to calculate very large cost savings to companies from an investment in workplace language, numeracy and literacy training, and found a direct correlation between participation in such training and subsequent successful entry into specific job-skills training in instances where this would not have occurred otherwise (Pearson *et al* 1996).

The Economist recently published the findings of a Harvard University study which confirms the above research. Improved employee productivity of 8.5 percent in manufacturing and of 13 percent in non-manufacturing industries occurred after companies raised their employees' educational level by one year. These measurements were the result of a comparison of the impact on companies' productivity by different kinds of workplace investments (*The Economist*, October 2 1996: 26)

Life-long learning is popularly seen to have a primarily recreational value. For many adult educators and students it also has a 'second chance' ethos in which adults are able to make up for opportunities that were not available to them when they were younger.

Adults have always engaged in life-long learning for vocational purposes and

for interaction in public and community activities, but these forms of learning have not often been perceived to be a consistent or necessary part of adult life. In contemporary society, however, where work, community and academic boundaries are increasingly merged it is crucial to reconceptualise life-long learning as the means through which language, literate and numerate learning occurs across a range of contexts, for a range of purposes and over an increasing chronological span (Falk 1995).

The ageing of the Australian population (ABS 1995) which itself generates population mobility, increases demand for adult and lifelong education and, ultimately, for new immigration to replenish and maintain a age distribution among the population appropriate to sustain a mixed and diverse economy.

The de-regulated adult education market of recent years has brought about a blurring of the lines between hobby-recreational education, general civics education and language and literacy training. TAFE colleges and universities now offer short courses and hobby programs while vocational language and literacy courses are taught in a range of settings by private and community providers.

On-going change in workplaces and the rapidity of technological innovation have also elevated the need for continuous, or life-long, education. These changes mean that even workers with well-developed language and literacy capability benefit from continually upgraded language and literacy education. The clearest instance is the large number of workers who have had to develop proficiency with computers and with continually changing software in the past decade.

The frequency with which career changes need to occur as well as the consequences of the general ageing of the population also bolster the need for a more articulated development of life-long learning as a systemic extension of schooling and post-school formal education and training.

Part VI: State and Territory programs in literacy

6.1 Literacy teaching and learning in South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services (DECS) schools

Literacy is seen as language in use - in reading (including viewing), writing, speaking and listening in socio-cultural contexts. DECS programs draw on a range of approaches to literacy learning. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own critical frameworks to recognise strengths and weaknesses in particular teaching practices and address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. However there is some tension between supporting teachers to develop understanding about the complexities of literacy issues and answering their calls for practical classroom activities which may over-simplify the issues.

Many schools currently have a major focus on literacy learning and assisting students experiencing difficulties. The ten schools involved in the Literacy Focus Schools Program provide leadership in developing, modelling and sharing good practice.

From the beginning of 1995, the early years has been a priority area for action. All DECS early years teachers (preschool, Reception and Years 1-3

teachers) have completed the Cornerstones training and development program, which involved 18 contact hours. The program provided theoretical underpinnings, describing literacy as social and cultural practice, and covered topics such as explicit teaching and school links with families and communities. Finding out what learners know and can do, identifying students needing early assistance and school /preschool planning for early assistance were important elements of this program.

Early Assistance plans

All junior primary schools and preschools have developed a plan for early assistance in 1996. These plans focus on improving teaching and learning, particularly for students experiencing difficulties in literacy learning. Cornerstones proposed five key elements of an early assistance program: transition; community connections; critically reflective teaching practice; charting students' literacy progress; providing additional support. School plans are generally based on one or more of these elements. A wide range of programs, including Reading Recovery and First Steps, is being used in implementing these plans.

Whole school structures

The Department's Quality Assurance Framework requires schools to list priority areas for action, and to be explicit about information management with respect to these priorities. Some schools have undertaken curriculum audits, to consider how literacy development is supported in different areas of study and to establish base line data about student outcomes, including outcomes for different groups of students. Many schools are reviewing existing processes including ways of optimising resource use (space, time, budget procedures, para-professional staff, non-school-based services). Others are considering related issues such as routines for engaging with parents.

Literacy and the areas of learning

Teachers need support to identify and explicitly teach literacy in each area of study. The writing based literacy assessment in the SACE has been a

catalyst for some change at secondary level, but there are still many teachers who think literacy has been dealt with when students have completed one piece of extended writing. At primary level, the view that literacy is largely the territory described in the English Statement and Profile is slowly changing.

Monitoring students' literacy learning

A profile describing literacy learning outcomes across the curriculum in the early years has been developed. Literacy achievement standards may also be described in the Curriculum Statement currently being developed for SA. Schools are collecting information to supplement that provided by the Basic Skills Tests of aspects of literacy and numeracy at years three and five. Some schools are developing local benchmarks. Others are turning to existing tests.

6.2 Literacy teaching and learning in Australian Capital Territory Department for Education and Training schools

Current situation

Literacy is an integral part of the ACT school curricula. In addition to usual classroom programs some children in primary schools participate in Reading Recovery. Learning Assistance programs for students in Year K-10 provide further support for the bottom 20% of students.

The ACT Department of Education and Training has an on-going ESL program providing a number of literacy and numeracy programs for students from non English speaking backgrounds.

New initiatives

1. The Government established a Literacy and Numeracy Fund in the 1996/97 budget and will be seeking advice from a group representing the educational community on how to improve literacy and numeracy in primary and high schools.

2. In 1995 the ACT Government announced a new initiative to develop

student literacy and numeracy skills through system level assessment and reporting.

During 1996 a Reference Group which included representatives from parents, teachers, the Australian Education Union and the ACT Department of Education and Training investigated available literacy and numeracy assessment instruments from around Australia.

The literacy assessment would provide:

a) parents with information of where their child's literacy and numeracy development is in relation to the learning of the whole ACT year group.

b) parents with further information of aspects of their child's learning in literacy and numeracy, whether this be in the area of remediation and/or extension, who may require assistance from the school system.

c) teachers with further information on individual learning of students and those who require remediation and/or extension.

d) teachers with further information on the areas of learning in literacy and numeracy on which they need to focus in their curriculum development, program planning and classroom teaching.

e) teachers, schools and the school system would be provided with further information of where to assist school planning and curriculum development, and focus professional development.

f) government and the department with further information on which to equitably allocate resources for learning needs in literacy and numeracy.

g) government, the department and the ACT community with information on the effectiveness of schooling in terms of literacy and numeracy outcomes.

h) government, the department and the ACT community with data to enable a comparison of student learning outcomes over time.

Implicit in this program is the provision of appropriate professional development for teachers for improving the skills of those students who need remediation and/or extension identified through the literacy assessment.

Another objective of this program is to link literacy development of students to the social objectives of schooling.

Apart from literacy and numeracy and other key learning areas, the school system aims to achieve a range of social objectives which relate to the attitudes and well-being of students. These social objectives are an important part of the schooling process and are inextricably linked to learning outcomes. Research indicates that there are clear links between student literacy skill development and capacity to function effectively in society. Self-confidence, optimism, self-esteem, respect for others and the achievement of personal excellence are strongly linked to being literate.

However testing alone does not achieve improvement. Data collected from the Developmental Assessment Resource for Teachers (DART) assessment would enable resource allocation to focus more directly on learning outcomes for young people. These outcomes include skills which assist students to have positive attitudes to all aspects of life. It is planned a similar curriculum based assessment instrument be introduced into high schools in 1998.

6.3 Literacy teaching and learning in Victorian Department of Education schools

Curriculum and Standards Framework

The Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) document (1995) provides the framework for curriculum delivery in Victoria and describes learning outcomes to be achieved in eight key learning areas. 'English' is one of the eight key learning areas.

The English CSF recognises that the development of literacy involves speaking, listening, reading, writing and thinking within a cultural context and enables a user to recognise and select language appropriate to different situations. It also acknowledges that new and emerging needs such as 'computer literacy' mean that different uses of literacy need to be considered in the classroom.

Key Learning Area Networks have been established in each school district to support schools in implementation of the CSF.

A package of materials, *Implementing the CSF: support materials for school leadership teams*, has been developed to further assist schools in implementation.

In Victoria, in the primary classroom, it is the teacher that has major responsibility to develop literacy skills in each key learning area. In the secondary school, literacy development is the responsibility of all teachers.

Course Advice

Course Advice has been developed for each key learning area. The English Course Advice provides sample teaching units for students in years P-10, including examples of good teaching practice which enable students to develop the skills and knowledge that constitute those aspects of literacy acquired through the explicit teaching of texts and language.

Assessment and Reporting

Support materials are being developed to assist schools to develop and implement policies and practices to improve student learning through the assessment and reporting of student achievement in relation to the CSF. All schools are required to use the CSF for reporting levels of student achievement in English and Mathematics in their annual reports.

In Years 3 and 5 the Learning Assessment Project (LAP) - a statewide data collection program - also provides parents and teachers with reports on

students' progress in relation to the CSF levels for English, Mathematics and one other key learning area.

Early Literacy

A major priority for the Victorian government is early literacy. Keys to Life, an early literacy initiative, was launched in Victoria in August 1995.

The *Keys to Life Early Literacy Program* is being developed to support primary schools to implement this initiative. It provides information and resources which are organised around the essential components which schools need to address in order to provide a successful early literacy program. They include:

- A structured and focused classroom literacy program. This involves explicit teaching and continuous monitoring and assessment and uses Guided Reading as a key instructional strategy.

- A process for providing additional assistance for those students who need it of which Reading Recovery is a major component.

- Strategies for increasing parent participation in their children's education, involving development and monitoring of strategic plans.

- Teacher professional development which is focused on early literacy teaching and learning.

The Keys to Life Early Literacy Program is based on best practice in Victoria and overseas and the materials are being trialed by 100 primary schools. These materials will be published as a resource kit and will be provided to all Victorian government primary schools in 1997.

Keys to Life tutors will be trained during 1997 and will provide training for teachers in schools using the professional development program included in the kit.

Another Victorian initiative is the Early Literacy Research Project which is a three year collaborative project between The University of Melbourne and the Department of Education. Its focus is to examine various aspects of early literacy teaching and learning and related funding matters.

6.4 Literacy teaching and learning in Queensland Department of Education schools

The Queensland Department of Education is committed to the improvement of literacy standards in Queensland schools. The *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* (1994-1998) provides an organising framework for planning, coordinating and focusing educational programs and management practices to maximise literacy and numeracy of all students in Queensland state schools.

The *English in Years 1 to 10 Queensland Syllabus* is a statement of curriculum policy that aims to develop students' abilities to use English as active and informed citizens. It also aims to develop and refine students' abilities to compose and comprehend spoken and written English fluently, appropriately, effectively and critically for a wide range of personal and social purposes. The syllabus is based on a five-part framework: assumptions about language; assumptions about language learning; scope and sequence; learning activities; and evaluation. Schools are required to develop School English Programs comprising a School English Overview, Class/Year Overviews, and Unit Outlines based on the five-part framework.

In 1995 all schools submitted School English Programs for review to measure the quality of School English Overviews (SEO) in Queensland government schools. Regional groups reviewed School English Overviews for the purpose of approving them or indicating to schools or clusters of schools that the SEO required further development in various identified areas.

Other important literacy activities currently being implemented in Queensland schools include the *Year 2 Diagnostic Net*, the *Queensland Year 6 Test, Reading Recovery, Appraisement*, the *Junior Secondary Literacy and*

Numeracy Investigative Study and the *Assessment of Performance Program.*

The Queensland Government introduced the *Year 2 Diagnostic Net* and *Year 6 Test* into all state primary schools in 1995. These initiatives seek to provide information on the performance of children in aspects of literacy and numeracy in Years 2 and 6. These processes also help identify children who require further support in literacy and/or numeracy. Using data from the Net and Test, the Department of Education provides additional funds to schools to develop whole-of-school intervention plans to be developed for children needing additional learning support in literacy and/or numeracy. Throughout 1996 Quality Assurance Officers evaluated schools' responses to their student attainment data. Case studies of best practice in intervention are being documented.

Reading Recovery is one of the key strategies being used to support children identified by the *Year 2 Diagnostic Net* as requiring additional assistance in literacy. *Reading Recovery* is a world acclaimed intervention program which provides individual children with daily intensive and specialised support in reading and writing. The aim of the program is to accelerate children's literacy learning to a point where they can operate successfully, independent of further assistance.

From 1997, the *Reading Recovery* program will be available in all regions in Queensland. Some 216 *Reading Recovery* teachers supported by 12 *Reading Recovery* Tutors will provide support for in excess of 2100 children. Additionally, in 1997 a Tutor Training Centre will operate from the Queensland University of Technology under the direction of the Education Department's Trainer of Tutors. This centre will initially train six Tutors for the Department of Education as well as Tutors sponsored by the non-state systems.

Appraisement is a school based process used to determine the educational programs and types of support for students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities. The appraisement tasks in literacy are a common set of

tasks in reading, writing and spelling through which a student's performance may be evaluated. Information gained from these tasks will be used, in conjunction with broader based data, to develop specific teaching programs to support development in literacy. The appraisement tasks will be trialed within schools in late 1996. Data generated through the common elements of the appraisement tasks will be used as a measure of consistency in the data collected across Queensland.

Fifteen Junior Secondary Literacy pilots were funded in 1996 to investigate the provision of a range of initiatives to support students experiencing difficulties with literacy. These initiatives provided information on student outcomes as a result of intervention programs. The efficacy of a variety of approaches including teacher-aide support; specialist teacher support; computer programs and whole class approaches was able to be assessed.

The *Assessment of Performance Program* has monitored statewide literacy and numeracy standards since 1990, based on light sampling. In 1996 the focus of this program is reading, writing and viewing in Year 7.

These initiatives, currently being implemented in Queensland state schools, aim to ensure that literacy teaching and learning continues to meet the needs and circumstances of the variety of children attending our schools.

6.5 Literacy teaching and learning in Western Australian Department of Education schools

Current Initiatives

1. Curriculum Council

The establishment of a Curriculum Council in Western Australia to develop broad Curriculum Frameworks for government and non-government schooling from K-12, represents a major change of curriculum policy development in this state. The drafting of an Overarching Curriculum Statement and eight Learning Area Statements is currently underway and these are scheduled for public release towards the middle of 1997.

The Overarching Curriculum Statement, when published, will provide a mandated framework for curriculum delivery and will make reference to cross-curriculum outcomes including literacy. Each of the eight Learning Area Statements will take account of cross-curriculum outcomes including literacy requirements and the English Learning Area Statement will describe the special relationship between this area and literacy.

2. Education Department of Western Australia Literacy Strategy

The Education Department is currently developing a Literacy Strategy that has as its purpose the consolidation of literacy activities under a broad strategic plan.

This will include a definition of literacy, a series of literacy principles, outcomes for literacy activities and a comprehensive database of literacy and literacy-related programs and projects. The first draft of this document is nearing completion and should be available from the beginning of 1997. A copy of the draft definition and principles is attached although it must be emphasised that these have no official status at this time.

3. Programs and Projects

The Education Department of Western Australia currently operates more than twenty centrally administered literacy and literacy-related programs and projects. There are many more district and school-based initiatives.

Two literacy programs represent the flagships of the Education Department's approach to literacy. They are *First Steps* and *Stepping Out.*

First Steps has been made available to all Western Australian government primary schools and is used as the prime literacy strategy by approximately 60% of primary schools. An external evaluation of the program published in 1995 showed that First Steps had made a significant difference to teacher practice and pedagogy, to school planning and to the breadth of literacy curriculum coverage. There is an increasing interest in *First Steps* from secondary schools.

Stepping Out is a professional development program that targets the primary-secondary transition years and focuses on literacy across the curriculum. Secondary teachers are provided with general literacy strategies and specific strategies related to the literacy practices of particular secondary subjects.

Other programs and projects relate to specific cohorts of students including those experiencing poverty, Aboriginal students, students for whom English is a second language or a second dialect, students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties, students who are gifted and talented and students who are geographically isolated.

Policy

The existing Education Department policy on literacy was written in 1979 and has not been updated since. The draft Literacy Strategy, together with the Overarching Statement from the Curriculum Council will frame literacy policy in Western Australian government schools in the near future.

Testing

The Education Department of Western Australia monitors the performance of students on aspects of literacy through the Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE) program. A random sample of students in year 3, 7 and 10 are tested in relation to strands defined in the National English Profile. Reading and writing were tested in 1990, 1992 and in 1995. Speaking and listening was tested in 1995 and viewing was trialed in 1995. Reports of students performance are published in the year following the tests and test materials are made available for use by schools.

The following literacy definition and principles are taken for the draft Literacy Strategy. They have no status at this time.

Definition

Literacy integrates reading, viewing, listening, writing, speaking and critical thinking. It includes the use of problem solving, computer and other technol-

ogy related skills and requires adaptability, specialised knowledge, the ability to look beyond the obvious and critique texts.

There are many forms of literacy, each with specific purposes and contexts in which they are used. What counts as literacy varies according to factors such as place, institution, purpose, period of history, culture and socio-economic circumstances.

Effective literacy is flexible and dynamic and continues to develop throughout an individual s lifetime.

Principles

The Education Department of Western Australia recognises that the achievement of literacy is supported when the following principles of literacy education are applied.

1. Students are provided with a language rich learning environment that complements the social and cultural contexts of the school and the community.

2. Students are engaged in developmentally appropriate literacy activities that provide for success and offer challenges that foster new learning.

3. Student literacy is assessed through a range of practices that:
   - cover all aspects of language and communication;
   - are purposeful;
   - provide meaningful feedback to students and parents/caregivers; and
   - inform decisions about future teaching and learning.

4. Students are provided with a coherent and sustained whole school approach to literacy teaching and learning.

5. Students are able to use language to learn and apply appropriate literacy practices to achieve learning outcomes in each area of study.

6.6 Literacy teaching and learning in Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts schools

Literacy Learning in the Department of Education and the Arts, Tasmania.
The Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development (DECCD), Tasmania launched its Literacy Policy in 1993. The policy established Literacy as a statewide priority and resulted in a number of strategically planned and coordinated system, district and school based program responses.

Publications
The following literacy teaching and learning materials were published and disseminated to all DECCD teachers K - 8:

Learning to Read and Write From Theory into Practice: critical principles for teachers. A Comprehensive booklet which documents current research and theory into the teaching reading and writing including the practical implications of this research and theory for classroom teaching.

The *Key Intended Literacy Outcomes* and support material: The DECCD Literacy Outcomes and support materials clearly define and describe the expected baseline literacy learning and provide information about appropriate learning activities, assessment practices and intervention strategies for each two-years of schooling from Kindergarten to Year 8.

District and school based initiatives
District Support Services play a major role in assisting schools provide support to students with disabilities and those experiencing Literacy and Learning difficulties. The District based Service includes: resource teachers, guidance officers, speech pathologists and social workers. Support Service officers work with the school, the teacher and the parent to develop literacy intervention programs for individuals and groups of students.

Literacy Programs in Early Childhood

The provision of four years of early childhood education in Tasmania provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that each year has a particular role and contribution to make to early literacy acquisition.

From the commencement of 1997 the major new initiative in the DECCD's budget is the provision of 64.5 FTE additional teachers. These teachers, along with the 66 FTE already working in the Early Literacy Support Program will be employed in a comprehensive early childhood Flying Start Program. This program will build on the literacy focus of the Early Literacy Support Program to include Literacy, Numeracy and Social Skills with students from Kindergarten to Year 3, including Parent Participation Programs.

Literacy Programs in Middle Schooling

In the Middle Years of schooling DECCD operates a Literacy Key Teacher Program. The program aims to provide professional development to Literacy Key teachers from High Schools, District High Schools and Senior Secondary Colleges. Professional development is provided for these teachers so that they can support teachers from their school with: literacy teaching and learning strategies, literacy assessment, planning and reporting of student progress toward attainment of the Key Intended Literacy Outcomes as required by the DECCD Personal Records Policy and the Reporting to Parents Policy.

In 1996 a Statewide Literacy Officer was appointed to coordinate the three regional networks which included 39 Key Teachers from secondary schools and six colleges. DECCD also allocated resources to support this work.

Literacy Programs in Years 10 -12

Senior Secondary Colleges in Tasmania have participated in the Statewide Literacy Key teacher program. All colleges have dedicated literacy and numeracy support programs for students with specific needs in this area. DECCD actively seeks to work with industry to develop education programs which focus on literacy in the context of training and work through the Key Competencies and Vocational Education and Training in Schools Programs.

The key intentions of these program are to improve Interpersonal, Literacy and Numeracy skills, and therefore work opportunities

6.7 Literacy teaching and learning in New South Wales Department of Education schools

All literacy activities in New South Wales are based on the K-6 English Syllabus, which is based on a functional approach to language. This is a sociological approach, emphasising how people use language to make meaning in different social and cultural contexts. It gives us a systematic way of describing how language functions in such contexts. The goal of all teaching, from Kindergarten to Year 12, is to equip students to use language in a way that recognises that texts are constructed within social and cultural contexts. This approach incorporates critical literacy skills and understandings.

Literacy initiatives

Literacy support for schools has been localised through the introduction of 40 district literacy consultants. Local schools benefit from strategic support provided by district teams.

The 40 literacy consultants provide carefully targeted support to both primary and secondary schools. In addition to the literacy consultants, the districts' literacy support includes a Learning Difficulties coordinator.

Literacy initiatives focus on early intervention strategies to prevent literacy failure. An additional 400 Reading Recovery teachers over a four year period, Parents as Teachers and the inter-departmental project all ensure support for early literacy development for schools and their communities.

The Early Literacy Component operates throughout the state to support K-3 teachers in improving the literacy outcomes of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds. In 1996 this included a series of twelve interactive satellite broadcasts for teachers. These broadcasts were enthusiastically received, particularly in rural areas. The broadcasts are available on video to all Department of School Education schools.

Literacy Across the Key Learning Areas Years 7 and 8 is a school-focused professional development package, consisting of four 2 hour modules. District literacy consultants and 40 school-based facilitators have been trained as facilitators.

Parent involvement is supported through a number of initiatives, including Parents as Teachers, Talk to a Literacy Learner (TTALL) and a two hour module Introducing the English K-6 Syllabus to Parents and Community.

1997 initiatives

In NSW *Agenda '97* outlines the priorities for the Department of School Education. In 1997 these priorities include improved literacy and effective teaching practice in reading. *Getting the Foundation Right* incorporates the literacy strategy, while the goal of *Excellence in Teaching and Learning* includes teacher training for effective classroom practice.

The State Literacy Strategy has a K-10 focus and encompasses a range of initiatives in teacher training and development, curriculum implementation support and student and parent programs. Its features will be:

- continuity in the development of each student's literacy skills through a planned approach;
- support for students in response to the identification of literacy needs at critical transition stages in students' literacy development;
- intensive local training and development for all teachers in recognising and addressing the literacy needs of students;
- provision of support for students who are experiencing difficulties with literacy;
- monitoring of school literacy achievements;
- development of effective learning partnerships with parents and caregivers.

Training material will ensure that all teachers who have students experiencing difficulties with reading are provided with the knowledge and skill

to help them meet their students' needs. The Department of School Education will provide teachers with a framework for addressing the issues of learning to read, assessing reading progress and teaching reading.

Secondary school literacy issues are also a priority. Literacy in key learning areas will inform teacher training and be supported by curriculum based activities for students beginning secondary schooling.

Assessment and testing

Literacy and numeracy Basic Skills Testing continues in Years 3 and 5. NSW is currently developing a Year 7 literacy test. 100 volunteer schools will participate in a pilot project to assess Year 7 students' literacy achievement in a range of key learning areas.

Our aim is to help teachers ensure that students are well prepared to meet the considerable literacy demands of secondary school.

6.8 Literacy teaching and learning in Northern Territory Department of Education schools

The Northern Territory Board of Studies curriculum currently uses the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (Dawkins 1991) definition of literacy. Approximately a quarter of the population of the NT are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Curriculum Provision

While the English curriculum carries the major responsibility for literacy development and assessment, all subject curricula are expected to identify their contribution to students' literacy.

Courses for indigenous students

The NT is committed to the development of *literacy in Aboriginal languages* as first languages. Bilingual programs currently operate in 20 schools using 34 languages.

There is extensive provision for the literacy needs of Indigenous students.

- The courses Intensive English, Foundation Studies and General Studies are 200 hour bridging courses for secondary age Indigenous students whose English literacy levels do not give them access to mainstream secondary courses.

- Indigenous students in remote areas can then study through Open Learning secondary courses which use contextually appropriate content and ESL methodology and are self paced to allow flexibility of delivery.

- Teachers of Indigenous students in Years 4 and 5 can use ESL materials

- comprising a lesson plan and student activity sheets for each day of the school year.

Profiling

Northern Territory Profiles are being written for the eight learning areas, consistent in scope and expectation with the nationally developed documents, but in a simplified version, and using the language and organisation of the NT subject curricula. The ESL Profile is based on the ESL Scales but incorporates elements of the Bandscales.

Teacher Professional Development

The *First Steps* professional development program began with the training of 36 school-based tutors across all regions in 1995. Seventy-one schools joined the program in 1996.

ESL in the Mainstream and *ESL in Anangu Schools* programs offer a series of 10 workshops which cover theory and issues of second language acquisition, issues and strategies for speaking, reading, writing, and implementation, assessment and evaluation issues and strategies.

The *Parents as Teachers* program offers parents/caregivers information and guidance to help children develop skills essential for later learning partic-

ularly early literacy behaviour. Books available for children to borrow when home visits are made include books in some Aboriginal languages.

Under the aegis of the National Literacy Enhancement program the Australian Education Union (NT) there are a number of *Literacy Education Officers* to assist teachers with the enhancement of children's literacy skills.

Teacher Resources

Schools of the Bush Materials, e.g. 'A Resource for Planning and Programming in Homeland Centre Schools', are sets of resources to enable Aboriginal teaching assistants to plan and program.

Walking Talking Texts assist teachers with programming, teaching and assessing ESL Aboriginal students in community schools.

Tracks Reading Materials Levels 1-4 are sets of reading materials in graded levels to introduce Aboriginal ESL learners to English literacy, including supportive materials for Year 3, with texts written by Aboriginal writers. Each book in the set of 10 has a main theme with a range of appropriate texts.

Assessment and Moderation

To gain a Northern Territory Certification of Education (Year 12) all students must satisfactorily pass a Writing Based Literacy Assessment.

Students in Year 10 are awarded a Junior Secondary Studies Certification. Thirty per cent of the English grade is derived from a Common Instrument of Assessment (CIA) which comprises the comprehension and composition of everyday texts and the comprehension of and ability to respond to literature. The question papers and the students' answers are to be benchmarked against the Northern Territory *English Profile*.

In the primary years, currently students in Years 5 and 7 in urban schools and students aged 11 to 16 in non-urban schools (schools with a predominantly Aboriginal enrolment) participate in a Multilevel Assessment

Program (MAP). The MAP has two components: the moderation of the assessment of student writing (currently only in a random sample of ten urban schools), and multi-level tests of reading comprehension.

Each year, a different genre of writing is assessed and moderated. The genres of writing to be taught are identified in the English curriculum, but are taught through different subject areas. The reading comprehension texts are literary and non-literary texts from range of curriculum areas.

While the tests for non-urban schools are contextually appropriate for students in those schools, there are components common to the urban and non-urban tests. The question papers and the students' answers are to be benchmarked against the Northern Territory *Profiles*. From 1997, the cohort to be tested in urban schools will be Years 4 and 6.

6.9 Current Practices in Literacy Education in the Catholic Sector

Context, Commitment and Direction

Within Catholic Education there is the diversity of educational need and situation that is represented across state and territory systems in Australia. This is reflected in the various strategies and systems of support that are offered to Catholic schools as part of a general commitment to the development of literacy for all students. The concern throughout the sector is to ensure good literacy practices at all levels of schooling and within a variety of schooling experiences. In the primary schools, the focus continues to be on support for literacy learning in the early years and for early detection and intervention for those with special needs and talents. In secondary schools there has been an increased emphasis on identifying students at risk and on supporting good literacy practices across the subject areas of the curriculum. Much has been achieved because teachers and consultants have the capacity to form working parties to address specific issues and to suggest more comprehensive approaches. Participation in government sponsored initiatives also provides some support for the sector.

For example, a three year literacy strategy which stresses professional development, continuity in teaching and assessment and the wide monitoring of literacy standards was introduced in the Sydney diocese in 1995. In South Australia, recommendations produced by a working party are determining priorities for a literacy strategy for all students from Reception to Year 10. Schools have been particularly well supported by the government's National Equity Program for Schools initiative which has enabled schools in remote areas of the Northern Territory to utilise multimedia technology for literacy learning. Schools in Victoria and Tasmania have benefited from the Early Literacy Component which involves pre and post testing of literacy achievement.

Collaborative Projects

One of the features of recent project development has been the increased capacity for the Catholic sector to form partnerships with government systems and with universities to promote the quality and relevance of professional development for teachers and the quality of outcomes for students. Nationally, teachers from Catholic schools have participated in National Professional Development Program projects sponsored by their professional associations and in association with various university providers, including the Australian Catholic University. In the diocese of Parramatta, schools have participated in the School Wide Literacy and Learning (SWELL) program of literacy research in partnership with Macquarie University. A collaborative project funded by the Literacy and Learning National Component program involved the Catholic Education Offices of Melbourne, Canberra/Goulburn and Perth in working with the Department of School Education in Victoria and the Department of Education in Western Australia.

Early Literacy

A long term investment has been made in some dioceses to the establishment of the First Steps program and more generally throughout the sector to programs of Reading Recovery. In Tasmania First Steps has been introduced in all schools K–6. In the Northern Territory, at Ltyentye Apurte, a bilingual school, many of the resources have been translated into the local language.

Many schools across Australia have begun with the writing component of First Steps, but in the ACT and Goulburn diocese Aboriginal Education Assistants have worked on the reading component in an attempt to promote reading development amongst urban and rural Aboriginal students. In Western Australia 'Collaborative Learning' projects have supported the successful implementation of First Steps through enhancing classroom management. Within the Victorian Quality Schools Project student attentiveness was also identified as a significant factor in student achievement and activities from technology and science were used to motivate and support literacy development. As a result of the commitment to early intervention for students experiencing difficulties, most children throughout the sector have access to programs of Reading Recovery within their school or diocese. Schools in the Melbourne diocese have participated in the production of an Interactive Satellite Learning Network (ISLN) program and five Catholic schools are featured in the resource publication. Successful Intervention: K–3 Literacy.

ESL and Teaching English as a Second Dialect

Catholic schools are particularly active in the area of teaching literacy to speakers of other languages and to speakers of dialects of English. There are a variety of programs provided especially for this purpose, ranging from programs of intensive English for new arrivals through to programs which provide literacy strategies for ESL learners across the curriculum and programs that focus on the different literacy demands of the various key learning areas. In the Kimberley schools, the Catholic Education Office is working on the Focus on English Language In Kimberley Schools project which assists teachers to make use of the students' first language as a starting point for the explicit teaching of Standard Australian English (SAE). The resource book Making the Jump offers support for the teaching of SAE as a second language/dialect to speakers of Aboriginal English and Kriol. In 1996, the Australian Catholic University provided an accredited TESOL course to teachers in the diocese of Parramatta to improve the literacy performances of ESL children by ensuring that all ESL teachers were trained. A second course has been run and an advanced course is planned for early

1997. In schools of high multicultural enrolment in the Sydney diocese bilingual support programs in literacy exist alongside ESL programs. In the Brisbane diocese programs for ESL in the mainstream have support.

Assessment Initiatives

The Catholic sector participates in government-sponsored initiatives wherever possible and supports appropriate assessment and reporting approaches. South Australia has provided an external assessor for the Australian Literacy Federation's National Schools English Literacy Survey. In NSW schools have participated in the Basic Skills Testing program for Years 3 and 5. In the Northern Territory, schools participate in the Multilevel Assessment Program for students from ages eleven to sixteen. Where the First Steps program operates there is an emphasis on the profiling of students through assessment benchmarks that characterise achievement. In Tasmania, 'Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting' were the focus of one day professional development workshops early this year. In the area of ESL, teachers use either the ESL Bandscales or the ESL scales to monitor student progress and report on achievement. Government initiatives in this area and in the area of outcomes based curriculum support the ongoing process of connecting literacy achievement to the quality of teaching and learning interactions that characterise Catholic schooling.

6.10Current Practices in Literacy Education in the independent schools sector

TASMANIA

The independent schools in Tasmania can be categorised into four broad groups:

- large high fee-paying schools such as Grammar, Scotch, Hutchins
- large parent controlled Christian schools such as Leighland, Emmanuel, Calvin
- small Christian schools such as the Adventist, Geneva Baptist, Eastside Christian
- small alternative type schools such as Steiner, Lambert, Cottage School

A 'snapshot' of literacy varies across this range of schools. The first two groups follow the more 'traditional' curriculum and have more resources and appropriate personnel such as special education teachers. Consequently these schools are pro-active in developing policy statements on literacy and assisting students with literacy problems.

The other two groups do not necessarily embrace the 'traditional' curriculum and appear to have fewer resources and personnel to attend to such matters as policy and intervention programs.

A brief overview of the current initiatives undertaken by the majority of schools would be broadening their definitions of literacy in the light of the English Statement and Profiles. Most schools in the first two groups utilise standardised tests, particularly for students who are considered at risk within the development of appropriate literacy skills.

Since 1994 the Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania's (AIST) Students at Risk (STAR) Program has allocated all funding to targeting students in secondary schools who have significant literacy problems. At a sector level, AIST Project Officers have worked cooperatively with schools in developing screening/testing procedures to identify students and supported schools in developing a range of literacy programs. Professional development has been designed to assist teachers in the identification of learning problems, curriculum design and the role of explicit teaching.

During the past two years through the NEPS Early Literacy Component, with the modest amount of funds available, AIST has addressed the following areas at a sector level:

- delivered professional development programs for teachers to facilitate literacy outcomes for students in the early years of schooling

- provided teachers with assistance in the identification of, diagnosis of, and program planning for students who are not demonstrating skills that could be expected at their age

- provided increased opportunities for parents to be involved with their child's literacy development.

VICTORIA

Early Literacy Component

National Equity Program For Schools, 1996

All Victorian independent primary schools were advised in August 1995 that Expressions of Interest were invited for funding for 1996 Early Literacy school based projects. Thirty-one schools with a total Prep–Grade 3 enrolment of 3,827 students responded.

Applications were assessed by the Equity Sub Committee of the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV). In reviewing the applications, consideration was given to numbers of students in years Prep–3, types of programs proposed including evaluation procedures, socio-economic ranking and alignment with Commonwealth Guidelines. Notional funding allocations were determined and applicant schools were asked to confirm viability of the proposal in the light of the notional funding recommendation.

Funding recommendations for 30 school based programs were approved by the Commonwealth as well as funding for a sector based project to be coordinated by AISV.

INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

Sector Project

The AISV Sector Project included three whole day workshops facilitated by Education Consultants. Topics addressed were *The How, When, Where, Why and What of Writing, Demystifying the English Curriculum and Standards Framework* and *What Works for Us.*

Two whole day sessions were conducted by a trainer from the Australian Parents Council for parent presenters to Implement the program *Collaborating for Successful Learning: the Parent Factor.* Parent teams (2–3)

represented a total of twelve schools at these training days.

A consultancy service was offered to a small number of selected schools. This service included advice on and review of existing literacy programs, assistance with the establishment of new literacy programs and review of existing resources. A report was provided to the school and to AISV following a school visit.

School Based Projects

There were many common elements in the 30 individual school projects. The *Reading Recovery Program*, Western Australia's *First Steps Program* and the *Reading Tutor Program* from Macquarie University were some programs which were carried over and consolidated from 1995 projects.

A typical comment:

> *teachers are very pleased with the fact that these students can be catered for in such an individual way. They report greater class participation by these students and greater confidence when attempting new work.*

Another:

> *First Steps is an extremely valuable resource in the area of literacy and provides a very effective framework to base teaching upon.*

Formalised teaching such as Screen testing and diagnostic testing were a focus for some of the twelve new schools into the program. Professional development activities included participation in an *Observing Early Reading and Writing* seminar which produced greater insights into the reading process and the variety of approaches taken by developing readers.

One school implemented a systematic phonemic and orthographic training program–an intensive skills reading program that requires a teacher-student ratio of 1:1. It was noted that this program was *highly effective in helping children with their reading* and that in the future it is hoped to examine and implement this method more broadly.

Many schools used the grant to increase resource material specifically for developing readers. Some of the programs were *Galaxy, Sunshine, Literacy Links, Foundations, Hands Up for a Story, Eureka Treasure Chest* and *Fitzroy Readers.*

Puppets, listening posts and audio visual equipment were other items listed as resources purchased or upgraded.

Two schools introduced the *Readers, Writers and Parents Learning Together* program and two other schools implemented the Australian Parents Council *Collaborating for Successful Learning: the Parent Factor.*

One school noted:

> *Strengthened skills and heightened cooperation from parents in assisting their children in reading and writing. Another expected better informed parents able to assist with classroom activities and able to provide more meaningful home support.*

A further comment:

> *The participation rate of parents in reading and writing activities in the Prep and Year 1 classes has increased and teachers have noted that the assistance is more effective.*

Language support teachers were engaged in 'special setting' schools and one such school noted:

> *that the provision of a flexible and individualised program continues to be critical in improving the skills of students who are not responding to the usual methodologies and materials–due in part to their significant social/emotional/behavioural difficulties.*

One country school arranged for a new graduate P–2 teacher to have two 5 day visits to a metropolitan school with recognised exemplary practice in the classroom. The aim was to develop skills in programming, planning, assessment and organisation for improved effectiveness in the early literacy

program.

In addition to specialists and classroom teachers, schools have engaged teacher aides (some bilingual), parents and volunteers in the broad range of programs and activities.

Evaluation

There was an expectation that funded schools would be represented at the series of professional development workshops facilitated by AISV. The workshops were conducted by Specialist Consultants, educational and financial accountability issues were addressed and case presentations and progress reports included in the programs. These workshops also foster the development of informal networks which are considered of real value for the teachers involved.

All funded schools have been recruited to provide interim reports to AISV. Specific comment was requested on outcomes and strategies for evaluation of the school based projects.

Some comments:

> *The Early Literacy Program is a very positive initiative in addressing the issues of students in P–3 experiencing failure and loss of confidence in relation to reading during a critical learning period in their lives.*
>
> *Students with learning problems will be rescued sooner rather than later.*
>
> *As children pass through the Reading Recovery program, the 'remedial tail' of the class will be shortened, and the learning of the whole group can progress.*

A number of the programs implemented were structured around self evalua-

tion, requiring mastery of one stage before progression to the next.

Most schools are working with the *Curriculum Standards and Framework* and many will record the students' progress using the software *Kidnap*. Other evaluation tools include *Running Records* and *Sight, Word and Phonic Awareness* tests and screening procedures such as ACER *Progress and Achievement* tests and *Reading Age* tests.

Ongoing monitoring of the students' progress was covered in a wide variety of ways, from the structured *Reading Recovery* system and *First Steps* Development Continuum to periodic individual testing, observation, work sample files and regular review meetings of teachers, parents and support staff.

A further comment:

> *This project has given teachers the chance to develop intense, carefully planned and challenging literacy programs for students struggling in this area of the curriculum. On a broader basis, it has given the school a chance to carefully evaluate programs for early literacy particularly relating to the purchase of materials, texts, etc.*

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Member schools of the South Australian Independent Schools Board (ISB) have a strong literacy focus across all areas of the curriculum from kindergarten to the compulsory years. Current initiatives at the junior primary levels involve schools in programs such as *First Steps* and *Reading Recovery*. There is a particular emphasis on the need to identify R–3 students at risk of failure in literacy. Students have been targeted for specific skills development with extended assistance in monitoring outcomes linked to both home and school. Volunteers, parents and care givers have been trained to support the work of teachers.

Extensive professional development and training for teachers have been part of programs developed in ISB schools. In addition to supporting teacher

knowledge and judgement, inter agency support and the acquisition of appropriate literacy resources have been explored.

A special project under the auspices of the Independent Schools Parents' Council has enhanced productive partnerships between schools and home. Parents and care givers have been encouraged to take an active role in their children's literacy development and a train the trainer model has enhanced confidence and knowledge of appropriate strategies to support children.

Information literacy programs and a closer examination of the viewing strand of the English profile and statements are emerging as significant directions in planning for 1997 and beyond.

The Writing Based Literacy Assessment (WBLA) which is part of the credentialling authority's requirements for the SA Certificate of Education (SACE) encourages senior secondary students to examine the construction of literacy across the curriculum. As this is a compulsory unit of the SACE, schools are able to effect policies and programs that embed the importance of a broad based and inclusive commitment to improving literacy standards.

QUEENSLAND

Independent schools in Queensland are providing education to young people from a diverse cross section of demographic, socio-economic and community oriented backgrounds. Students identified as at risk of developing literacy deficiencies (including low socio-economic background students, young people experiencing home and family dislocation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, girls and students with severe physical and learning disabilities) are present in varying degrees of concentration throughout the independent schools.

Department of Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) funding under the Early Literacy Component (ELC) of the National Equity Program for Schools (NEPS) has been used to promote and extend teachers' utilisation of intervention strategies to address the literacy learning needs

of students from pre-school to Year 3. Professional development programs have supported the introduction of programs such as *Early Years Literacy In-service Program* (EYLIP), *Teacher Aides and Parent Supporters Program* (TAPS), *Support-a-Reader, Support-a-Writer, Reading Recovery* and *First Steps*, involving teachers and parents in the independent sector.

The objectives of the literacy program have been to initiate intervention strategies which foster and recover improved literacy and learning skills in the early years of schooling, to provide professional development opportunities for teachers to ensure appropriate literacy intervention strategies are implemented and to foster joint school and home programs. The program has two main elements, a school based intervention strategy and a professional development element for teachers.

Queensland government funding under Shaping the Future has been utilised to train a Reading Recovery tutor in New Zealand this year. This tutor will begin training Reading Recovery teachers in Brisbane in 1997. A consultant has been working with schools to facilitate the introduction of *Support-a-Reader* and *Support-a-Writer* programs.

A number of schools participated in the National School English Literacy Survey. Many independent schools in Queensland have participated in the Year 2 Diagnostic Net and the Year 6 Test.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Support in early literacy intervention has been provided to a target group if schools. This has involved whole school assessments of the current weaknesses and strengths in the literacy programs of small schools. Individual school plans have been developed to match the needs of different schools to better cope with the problems they face.

First Steps training has been made available to all these schools. Support has been given by way of whole school professional development and individual teacher support. A network of classroom teachers trained as trainers in the

First Steps material have established a network to act as the Focus B teachers in the Independent Schools group.

A small group of schools are specifically looking to develop the Multi Age Group classroom programs and are currently experimenting and developing pedagogies to better deliver these programs. A visitation and support program has been set up to share ideas and discuss possible implications for the building and design of future Early Years Learning Centres.

Collaboration between the ESL support consultants and the Early Literacy Consultant has meant the establishment of jointly funded and jointly supported professional development early literacy groups in the network of Independent Schools.

A pilot group of junior schools are working to develop better ways of communicating with parents, progress in the early literacy years. The teachers are using the National Professional Development Program training and support structures to refine how the Student Outcome Statements, *First Steps* continuum and student sample profiles will be used in their schools.

Parents as Partners in *First Steps* literacy development has been incorporated into the program offered by most schools. Workshops and training sessions along with the production of newsletters sent from the schools to the homes offer ideas on literacy building activities.

NEW SOUTH WALES

The independent sector in NSW comprises a diverse number of schools with a wide range of educational, religious and cultural perspectives. Each school operates autonomously in the provision of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment within the school. It is therefore not possible to provide other than an overview of initiatives in the area of literacy and professional development.

The following provides a list of literacy activities in which teachers and

schools from across the sector are actively participating.

Early Literacy

The literacy program, *First Steps*, partially funded through the Early Literacy Component, is of interest to an increasing number of independent schools, including those combining primary and secondary campuses. Several schools have decided to address the continua from a whole school perspective (primary/ secondary). Schools following the NSW English K–6 Syllabus document find First Steps highly compatible with the philosophy of this document and supportive in the range of teaching strategies and activities.

Another professional development initiative funded through the Early Literacy Component is the *Teaching Early Reading More Successfully* program. This program articulates the essential components of the reading process as identified by current literature and provides teachers with the link between theory and practice. Teachers have found this program useful for providing an understanding of curriculum based assessment and program design.

Literacy In The Middle Years

An initiative made possible through the National Professional Development Program (NPDP), which has created a great deal of activity is the Promoting Critical Information Skills project. It provides school teams, including teacher librarians and classroom teachers working with students from Years 5–9, with the opportunity to explore approaches in teaching the critical evaluation of the information skills associated with technology. These include the skills necessary to access the various technologies available including CD-ROM and Internet. Schools have developed a variety of school-based initiatives including information skills policy, Internet access policy and implementation of the teaching of critical literacy skills across subject areas.

In addition, there is substantial interest in the development of literacy policy

and practice across the middle years of schooling as a result of the NPDP secondary literacy project outlined below and the provision of funding for associated action research projects.

Secondary Literacy

Within the independent sector in NSW there has also been a growing interest in the area of literacy across the curriculum, particularly in secondary schools. This interest has in part been sparked by several initiatives.

During the early 1990s the Association of Independent Schools, NSW and the Catholic Education Office, Sydney jointly developed a set of professional development materials for junior secondary teachers. The resource is known as Accessing Learning and has been well received in schools both in Australia and abroad. Many secondary English teachers have been interested in learning about how a functional approach to the teaching of language can enhance their own teaching. From their interest has grown a strong demand from their colleagues in other subjects keen to meet the literacy challenges their students face on a daily basis.

Finally in 1995, the NPDP consortium in NSW developed a highly successful program, known as *Literacy Across the Key Learning Areas Years 7 and 8*. The diverse models of delivery of these programs have included a number of professional development school-based initiatives of a long term and on-going nature.

The provision of Commonwealth funding through the programs such as Early Literacy and the National Professional Development Program have allowed teachers in NSW independent schools to access professional development initiatives in an on-going and meaningful way.

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